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THE HAMPSTEAD MYSTERY.

VOL. I.

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The Hampstead Mystery.

A Novel.

BY

FLORENCE MARRYAT,

AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,' 'VÉRONIQUE,' 'MY OWN
CHILD,' 'MY SISTER THE ACTRESS,' 'HOW LIKE
A WOMAN,' 'PARSON JONES,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE HAMPSTEAD MYSTERY.

The Hampstead Mystery.

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CHAPTER I.

‘ONCE for all,’ exclaimed Mr Crampton, bringing down his broad fist heavily upon the table, ‘once for all, I tell you, *I will not have it.*’

At this terrible assertion, Mrs Crampton shivered as if she had been struck, and Aunt Clem silently dissolved into tears. Henry Hindes, of all the party, alone preserved his composure. He leaned back in his chair, carefully trimming his filbert nails with a penknife, as if the affair under discussion were not of the slightest moment.

‘Of course you will not have it,’ he said after a pause to Mr Crampton, ‘no man in his senses would. Mr Frederick Walcheren has money and good looks, but there his claims to admiration end. The first you do not require for your daughter, and the second would have no weight with anyone but a woman. To place against these supposed advantages, Mr Walcheren is a young man of dissolute habits, and lavish expenditure. You should hear what his cousin, Philip Walcheren, says of him.’

‘I want no one’s opinion but my own,’ replied Mr Crampton vehemently. ‘Jenny will have all my money by-and-bye, and she shall marry no man that will make ducks and drakes of it. Besides, he isn’t good enough for her in any way. He thinks, I suppose, because his family have been a set of idle scoundrels for centuries past, while my progenitors have been working to support their children, that his is the better of the two, but I don’t see it. Besides, if he were the heir to the Crown, he shouldn’t have my daughter. He’s a

Roman, that's more than enough for me. I'll have no Papists in my family. I hate the whole crew, with their cunning, under-hand ways. If Jenny won't give this Walcheren fellow over, I'll lock her up on bread and water till she comes to her senses again.'

As neither of the ladies made any answer to this threat, Mr Hindes interfered again.

'Surely,' he said with an incredulous smile, 'Miss Crampton will not dream of opposing your wishes in this particular, when so much depends upon her obedience. What can she see in this young man to attract her, above others of his kind; she who has a crowd of admirers wherever she goes, and is the acknowledged beauty of Hampstead? I believe, Crampton, that you are alarming yourself without cause. Miss Crampton means nothing serious. She is merely amusing herself with the sight of young Walcheren's infatuation for her.'

'It's more than that,' returned the older man; 'I've forbidden the girl to dance with

him when she meets him out, or to receive him here during my absence. And now, her mother tells me, she met them riding together yesterday afternoon, and has intercepted a letter from him to Jenny, in which he writes as though they were promised to each other. What am I to do? I can't be always at my daughter's elbow, and her mother can't go galloping all over the country after her. It is disgraceful to think that a young lady of twenty can't be trusted to behave herself properly as soon as she is out of her parents' sight!

‘Don't you think you are making rather a mountain out of a molehill?’ inquired Henry Hindes, in the same calm way. ‘Doubtless, Miss Crampton is young and thoughtless, and, if I may venture to say so—perhaps just a wee bit spoilt; but is that any reason that you should suspect her of impropriety? And, after all, is there anything wrong or unusual in a lovely girl being followed and persecuted by her admirers? Perhaps, if the truth were known,

Miss Crampton might be as well pleased to get rid of Mr Walcheren as you would be.'

At this juncture, Mrs Crampton took heart of grace to put in her oar.

'Oh, thank you, dear Mr Hindes!' she exclaimed. 'I am sure you are right. That is, I feel certain that Jenny cares no more for Mr Walcheren than for anyone else. She is a trifle wilful and does not brook contradiction well—I acknowledge that—and perhaps papa and I have spoilt her a little; she is such a darling, you know, that it is very difficult not to spoil her—but she would never really oppose our wishes. Papa has only to speak to her—'

'Nonsense!' interposed Mr Crampton gruffly. 'I have spoken to her a dozen times already, and she laughs in my face and disobeys me as soon as my back is turned. But this business has gone far enough, and I mean to put a stop to it. Where is the girl?' he continued, turning to his wife; 'go and tell her I wish to speak to her at once!'

‘ My dear, she has not risen yet. I do not suppose she is awake ! ’

‘ And it is past eleven,’ said her husband.

‘ Yes ; but remember how late she was up last night. I don’t think we were home till past two o’clock.’

‘ Whilst she was dancing with this young jackanapes, I conclude, and letting him make eyes at her ! Well ! it is for the last time, I can tell Miss Jenny that ! If she disobeys me again, I’ll take her right away from Hampstead, and she shall never see it till the fellow’s dead, or married. No Papistical grandchildren for me ! I can tell her that ! ’

‘ Oh, Mr Crampton ! ’ cried his wife, with affected horror.

‘ Yes, it is “ Oh ! Mr Crampton,” ’ repeated the old man angrily, mimicking her thin tones, ‘ and it’ll be “ Oh ! Mrs Crampton,” if you don’t take care. It’s more than half your fault ! You should look better after your daughter, and then these unpleasant-ries wouldn’t happen. But you let her have her own way in everything. She

just rules you and Miss Bostock, and then you leave me to rectify your errors. It isn't fair on either me or the child!'

Mrs Crampton and her sister, Miss Bostock, familiarly known as Aunt Clem, were now weeping in concert.

'I am sure,' sobbed the mother, 'I've done everything in my power, short of turning Mr Walcheren out of doors, to prevent his calling here so often, because I knew you didn't wish it, John. Last time he came I would not order up tea, until Jenny made such a point of it that I could not refuse. And when the dear child rides, or drives, you know it is impossible for me to supervise her actions.'

'You should go with her,' grumbled her husband.

'Oh! dear! I wouldn't sit behind those cobs of hers for all the world! It frightens me to see her drive them. And she won't come out in the barouche with Aunt Clem and me. She laughs at the very idea. She is so very high-spirited,

you see. She must have her own way in everything !’

‘ Well, go and fetch her here,’ said Mr Crampton shortly ; ‘ I must speak to her before I go to town.’

‘ But if she is not dressed, my dear,’ remonstrated his wife.

‘ Tell her to dress at once and come to me ! Now, no nonsense, or I’ll pull her out of bed myself.’

The two women flew from the room to prevent so awful a contingency, and the men were left alone. They were partners in the well-known firm of Messrs Hindes & Crampton, wool-staplers in the city.

Henry Hindes, although much the younger of the two, was head of the business, having inherited his share through the death of his father. He was a man of about five or seven and thirty, smooth and solid looking, but much more polished in manners and appearance than his partner. His fair, thin hair was parted in the middle, and combed close to his head. He possessed a powerful brain and a good knowledge

of business. His blue eyes, straight thick nose, and smiling mouth, gave him a benevolent and cordial look, which made him a favourite in society. He was always perfectly dressed, and was proud of his white hands and filbert nails.

People who wished to do business with the firm, always preferred to see the senior partner to the junior, because the former was so *suave* and courteous, and the latter so rough and curt.

But Mr Crampton was the tenderer-hearted man of the two, though he did not show it so much. His private purse-strings were always open to help a disabled workman, or to head a subscription for the widows and orphans of those who were removed by death. He was a man of strong views, however, and a somewhat obstinate temperament, and this business of his daughter and Mr Frederick Walcheren had disturbed him very much. A Scotchman by birth, and brought up as a Nonconformist, he had a righteous horror of Popery, and everything connected with

it. On this account alone he had, from the first, discountenanced the acquaintance-ship of Mr Walcheren with his family; and to find that his daughter had, in express opposition to his wishes, made an intimate friend of the young man, wounded him in his tenderest point. He sat very gloomy and silent after his wife and sister-in-law had left the room, and Mr Hindes tried his utmost to make him regard the matter in a more hopeful light. For years he had been as intimate in the domestic circle of the Crampton family, as he was with his partner in the city, and was regarded as their nearest friend by them all.

‘This is a matter that only requires a few words of explanation to set it right, Crampton,’ he remarked, ‘so it’s no use looking so black about it. You must allow that you and your wife have rather given Miss Jenny her own way, and naturally she clings to it. But she loves you both too much to wilfully oppose you.’

‘I hope so, I hope so!’ replied the old man. ‘But spoilt children are not always the most grateful, Hindes. I trust that Jenny may listen, as you say, to reason, but I would rather appeal to the young man himself. Perhaps, if he knew that we will never give our consent to her marrying a Papist, he might see the advisability of giving up the pursuit.’

‘I will speak to him, if you empower me to do so,’ said Hindes, eagerly. ‘He is sure to be at the Bouchers’ dance to-night. I did not intend to go, but I believe Hannah wishes to do so, and the opportunity will be an excellent one, particularly if Miss Crampton is to be there, and carries out your prohibition with respect to dancing with him. He will sulk and sit out, and I shall be able to give him a hint as to your disapproval of his suit.’

‘Do so, Hindes, and I shall be exceedingly obliged to you,’ replied Mr Crampton. ‘And, if that fails, we must take Jenny away, for, by hook or by crook, I am determined to shake that young fellow off.’

‘Hannah is going with the little ones to Broadstairs next week. What do you say to Miss Crampton accompanying her? You know how fond my wife is of your daughter, and she would watch over her like a mother. At all events, it is worth thinking of.’

‘It would be a capital plan,’ said Mr Crampton; ‘but why are you going?’

‘Because it is time one of us was at the office, my dear fellow; and, since you are about to speak to your daughter on this subject, it is just as well I should be out of the way. I shall see you later in the afternoon, but don’t hurry on my account. And I shall not forget to speak to Mr Walcheren this evening. I shall not spare him, I promise you, but lay it on as thick as I know how, and, if he doesn’t like it, he must do the other thing. By the way, I know the cousin, Philip Walcheren, as well as their mutual director, Father Tasker, so, if the young man won’t hear reason, I will appeal to them. There is one convenience about these Papists, you can generally wield them through their directors.’

‘Yes, the silly fools! said Crampton contemptuously. ‘They’re afraid to say their lives are their own if the priests say they’re not. Pooh! call them *men*. They’re more like a flock of silly sheep, who run baa-ing after their shepherd.’

‘In that case,’ replied Mr Hindes, smiling, ‘I’m afraid Mr Frederick Walcheren must be one of the lost sheep, for, from all I hear, he does not trouble the church, nor the director of his conscience much. But I’ll do my level best to bring him to hear reason in this instance. *Au revoir.*’

And, with a nod and a smile, he was gone.

‘He’s a true friend,’ thought Mr Crampton to himself, as he took up the *Times*, and tried to possess his soul in patience until the appearance of his daughter.

Meanwhile, Mrs Crampton and Miss Bostock were making their way, timidly, towards the young lady’s bedroom. In the ante-chamber they encountered her maid, employed in sewing.

‘Is Miss Crampton awake yet, Ellen?’ demanded her mother.

‘Oh! no, ma’am, I haven’t heard a sound of her, and she begged me particularly not to call her till she rung. She was terrible tired, she said, and didn’t wish to be disturbed.’

‘I’m sorry, Ellen, but I’m afraid I must wake her now. It’s past eleven, and her papa particularly wishes to see her before he leaves for the city,’ replied Mrs Crampton.

‘Oh, dear! I’m sure I don’t know what she’ll say,’ remarked the maid, as she re-applied herself to her work, and looked as if she was glad the task had not fallen to her.

The two ladies entered the adjoining bedroom on tip-toe, and as if they feared the result of the least noise. It was one of the most perfectly-arranged chambers a young girl could desire, and it was pre-evident that its furnishings had been selected with the greatest care, and for someone who was much loved and treasured. The walls and chintzes were all of palest pink, the wood-work of white enamel, and the hangings of

lace. On the walls were hung a selection of photographs, chiefly of dogs and horses, for Miss Crampton's tastes ran in that line, and the low, walnut-wood bookcase was filled with the best authors. Everywhere were signs of profusion and luxury, for the Cramptons were rich and spared no expense for this one beloved child, who made all the joy of their lives. The toilet table was covered with silver and cut glass, and on the mantelpiece stood a handsome clock and candelabras of Sevres china; but the fairest sight in all the room was Jenny Crampton herself, as she lay, flushed, dishevelled and palpitating on her bed, one of the most beautiful specimens of work that ever proceeded from the Creator's hand. It was difficult to believe that the two plain women who stood gazing at her from the foot of the bed, could be her nearest blood relations. The questions of hereditary resemblances and non-resemblances are amongst the most anomalous in Nature. Whence did Jenny Crampton inherit her perfect features and colouring? Her father was a

type of the average middle-class Englishman. He had a broad-set, muscular figure, with legs too short for his size, a florid complexion, with thick bushy eyebrows, a heavy nose, and a long upper lip. His small grey eyes were shrewd, but honest and benevolent-looking, and his hands and feet were large and coarse. His wife and her sister might have stood, with a little caricaturing, for the Frenchman's notion of an 'English Mees.'

Mrs Crampton had the shapelier and more matured figure of the two, and her soft brown eyes, attenuated nose, and weak drooping mouth, might once have been styled pretty, but they both possessed the same tall, flat frames, with sloping shoulders, long hands and feet, and limp, lustreless hair. In what enchanted moment, then, had such progenitors given life to such a lovely creature, as lay asleep upon the bed before them? Her rounded dimpled arms were thrown restlessly above her head (for it was summer weather), and were half hidden by the mass of light chestnut hair, that

strayed over her pillow. Her tints were those of a maiden-blush rose. From her neck and shoulders to her flushed cheeks, her skin was of one uniform texture, of a pale cream, just touched with pink. Her lips were slightly parted as she slept and showed the row of white teeth within. The lashes of her eyes lay thick and long upon her cheeks; and those eyes, when open, formed, perhaps, the very chief of her attractions. They were long, limpid eyes, of a light hazel colour, and with the startled expression in them of a deer or a child; eyes which made strangers think that Jenny Crampton was one of the most innocent of God's creatures upon earth, but which changed considerably in expression when Jenny's wishes were in any way crossed, or her requests disregarded. From the time when she was a lovely little child (the only one they had ever kept since its earliest infancy) Mr and Mrs Crampton had learned to dread the clouding over of those beautiful orbs, and the pouting of those pretty lips. It was in their power to gratify every wish

of their child, and so they gratified themselves at the same time by avoiding anything so distressing to them as her tears.

Everyone had combined to spoil Jenny Crampton from her babyhood, and by this time the young lady was pretty well beyond all control. The father acceded to her every request, however unreasonable or extravagant; and the mother and aunt only lived to worship her. Even poor Aunt Clem, who was the standing butt for Jenny's ridicule, or the mark for her ill-humour, considered herself well repaid for all her patience and endurance if the spoilt beauty gave her an occasional hasty kiss (or rather peck) on her cheek, or her cap, or wherever it might chance to fall, or honoured her by a request to tie her sash, or do a commission for her. This was the sort of education the poor girl had received to enable her to face the rebuffs of the world. But, though her bringing-up had been very faulty, there was no mistake about her beauty. Far or near, all round Hampstead and its environs, there was not

a girl who could vie in good looks with old Crampton's daughter, and, as her father was known to be a very wealthy man, Jenny had more admirers than she could count on her ten fingers. But, of them all, none had really appealed to her senses but Frederick Walcheren. The Cramptons and Aunt Clem had a tough time before them.

'How lovely she is!' sighed Miss Bostock, as an intuition of their presence, even through her dreams, made Jenny turn restlessly and throw herself into another becoming attitude on the other side of the bed.

'Yes! indeed, Clem; but I'm afraid I must rouse her,' whispered Mrs Crampton. 'Papa is really vexed about this business, and, if she doesn't see him at once, I fear he may be more so. Jenny, my darling!' she continued, going round to the girl's side and laying her hand gently on her shoulder, 'Jenny, dear love, wake up; there's a dear! Papa wants to see you before he goes into the city.'

'Eh! what?' said the girl drowsily, as

she turned away, 'it's not time to get up yet. I'm so sleepy.'

'But, Jenny, love, try and rouse yourself,' repeated her mother, rather tremblingly, 'your father wants you, dear. He won't keep you long. You need only put on a tea-gown and can come back and finish your toilet afterwards. Come Jenny, make an effort, love, for papa won't be denied.'

The girl opened her big hazel eyes then, and stared stupidly at her aunt and mother.

'You here, mamma!' she ejaculated, 'and Aunt Clem! What on earth is the matter? Is the house on fire?'

'No! no! dear, of course not, but papa wants to speak to you for a minute before he leaves home.'

'Then he must wait till he comes back,' replied Jenny, as she closed her eyes again, 'for I'm a great deal too sleepy to see anyone. Go away, do! mamma, and leave me alone. It's a shame to go waking me in this way, when you know I was dancing up to three o'clock this morning.'

'I know, darling, I know!' said Mrs

Crampton, almost weeping, 'and I wouldn't have done it for the world, only papa insisted on it, and you know what he is when he's set on having his way. Jenny, my dear; do try and rouse yourself a little, for papa says if you don't go down and see him, he will come up here and pull you out of bed himself.'

At this intelligence, Miss Crampton did see fit to open her eyes a little wider, and sit up in bed. Perhaps her conscience warned her what this unusual severity on the part of her father might portend, but she looked exceedingly cross as she did so.

'I never heard such nonsense in all my life,' she exclaimed, 'what can he have to say to me, that will not keep till dinner-time? I can't be down for half-an-hour, at anyrate, so papa must wait my pleasure. Where's Ellen? She must come and help me dress! My goodness me, Aunt Clem,' she broke off suddenly, as she caught sight of that lady's sympathetic features regarding her wistfully from the foot of the bed,

‘don’t stand there goggling at me like a stork on one leg, or you’ll drive me out of my senses. Go and call Ellen, do! If I’m to see papa, someone must dress me. I don’t suppose he wants me to walk downstairs in my night-dress, though he is in such a hurry.’

‘No! no! love, of course not!’ returned her mother, hastily. ‘Clem! call Ellen, and tell her Jenny is going to get up. Now, darling! what can I do to help you?’

‘Nothing,’ replied her daughter peevishly, ‘unless you will give papa a dose of morphia to keep him quiet till I can dress myself. What *is* all this mystery about? Why can’t you say why the old gentleman is so desirous of my company this morning. He is not in the habit of dragging me out of bed, after a ball, at this unearthly hour.’

‘It is nearly twelve o’clock, my dear!’ said Mrs Crampton evasively.

‘What of that? I ordered my trap to be round at four this afternoon, and told Ellen particularly that she was not to come

near me till I rang. You know the Bouchers' dance is on to-night, and a nice figure I shall look at it if I do not have my sleep out first.'

'Well, dear,' replied her mother, soothingly, 'you can come to bed again, if you think fit, in the afternoon. You know *I* wouldn't have disturbed you for all the world, but gentlemen are not always so considerate. And your father insisted upon my doing so, so what could I say?'

'What's the row about?' repeated Jenny, as her maid began to brush out and twist up her superabundant hair.

But Mrs Crampton was too discreet to say all she knew before a servant.

'Oh! it's nothing particular, my love, and your father had best tell you himself. You needn't be afraid, he loves you too dearly ever to scold you, whatever you may do or say.'

'Oh! I'm not afraid of the old man!' rejoined the young lady; 'only he'd better not go too far with me. I can guess what all the fuss is about, mamma, and I've

got a will of my own, as well as he has. If papa is going to lecture me about Mr—'

'Now, dear, don't mention any names,' interposed Mrs Crampton quickly, 'for it may only lead to mischief. Your papa must tell you his own business, and I'm sure you'll do all in your power to fall in with his wishes.'

'I'm not so sure of that,' replied the young lady, with a *moue*. 'Here, Ellen, give me my blue tea-gown! My hair will do very well, for I shall most likely be in bed again in half an hour. Go down, whilst I'm with Mr Crampton, and fetch me some chocolate and a piece of toast, and let it be ready when I come back. Now! mamma, we'll go and beard the old lion in his den.'

CHAPTER II.

JENNY looked, if possible, lovelier than usual as she tripped downstairs beside her mother and her aunt. Her face was still flushed from sleep, and her hair had been twisted up anyhow, whilst the pale blue gown she wore accorded well with her rose-leaf complexion. Mrs Crampton and Miss Bostock accompanied her in trembling dread of the coming encounter, but the girl herself was perfectly confident and fearless. As they reached the door of the library, where her father awaited her, she caught sight of Aunt Clem's visage and burst out laughing.

‘Oh, dear!’ she cried, ‘Aunt Clem, if you don't put on some other kind of face, you'll kill me! When you assume that

lugubrious expression, you look so like a cow that I always expect to hear you low.'

'Dearest child! that is not kind,' remarked her mother, with mild reproof.

'Oh! never mind, it doesn't signify, I am sure dear Jenny doesn't mean it,' interposed Aunt Clem, who had, nevertheless, winced under the sarcasm.

'I did mean it, though,' cried Jenny boldly; 'one would think I was going to be hanged to see your long faces. Well, papa!' she continued, as they entered the presence of Mr Crampton, 'and what may you have to say to me this morning? You'll have to pay for dragging me out of my bed in this outrageous manner, you know, and I sha'n't be pacified until you buy me that little Arab mare of Mr Winchers'. Is it a bargain?'

She looked so saucy and so pretty as she said this, and perched herself on her father's knee, that Mr Crampton, in his pride and affection, was very nearly granting her request without further protest.

But the remembrance of the Popish admirer intruded itself just in time to prevent the folly. Nevertheless, he kissed his daughter's blooming cheek, and said,—

‘If you will be a good girl, and do exactly as I tell you, you shall have a dozen Arab mares if they will please you, Jenny.’

‘All right, old gentleman! that's a bargain. Now for the conditions.’

‘But we must speak seriously, my dear, for I am quite in earnest in this matter. You have been encouraging a young man to come about here, Jenny, of whose acquaintanceship you know I do not approve—I mean Mr Frederick Walcheren. Now, I must have a stop put to it at once. He never comes here again, nor will I allow you to meet him out of the house, unless it should be by accident, nor to dance with him if you do meet him. I hope you understand me plainly. I will not permit you to know any of the Walcherens from this time forward. You must entirely drop

them. Nor shall your mother ask them to my house. And I shall never remove this prohibition from you—*never !*

‘Anything more?’ asked Jenny, shortly.

A close observer might have seen and interpreted the change in her countenance as she listened to her father’s mandate. Into the light hazel eyes had crept a much darker shade, and the full lips had pouted till they had become sullen. But all she said was ‘Anything more?’

‘I do not know that, as ^{your} father, I am in any way called upon to give you my reasons, my dear, but, since you seem to ask for them, I will. You appear to me to have shown a marked preference for Mr Frederick Walcheren’s society, and, as it would be impossible for you to marry him, it is best the affair should be put an end to at once.’

‘He has plenty of money,’ argued the young lady.

‘I am aware of that, and the uses he has hitherto put his money to. He is a gambler and a loose liver. But that is not

the chief objection to him in my eyes. His vices might be reformed, but not his religion. Young creatures like yourself do not think of such things, but the Walcherens are all Roman Catholics, and that fact puts an insuperable barrier between them and us. I would never, under any circumstances, give my consent to your marriage with a Papist. I would rather see you in your grave, Jenny, and I cannot say more than that. If you have entertained any such idea, you must dismiss it from your mind at once. And in order that there may be no fear of such a thing—in order to secure your happiness and safety, I insist upon your giving up the acquaintanceship of this young man altogether. You must not ask him to the house again, and, if he calls, your mother will order the servant to say that she is not at home. If you meet him out, you have my strict commands not to dance with him, or to talk more than the merest politeness necessitates. If, notwithstanding these precautions, I find Mr Walcheren-

is obstinately bent on thrusting himself where he is not welcome, I shall take the law into my own hands, by carrying you away from Hampstead to some place where it is impossible you can meet him. Don't think me harsh, Jenny, for, God knows, that is the last thing I wish to be towards you, but I have spoken to you on this subject several times before, and I find you have taken no heed, so you force me to speak more plainly. Do you quite understand me now ?'

'Yes, I understand,' said the girl sullenly.

'And you promise obedience?'

'How can I do otherwise than obey?' she broke out passionately. 'The house is yours, and you can do as you choose with it and those who enter it. And Frederick Walcheren is not a man to thrust his company where it is not wanted. All these accusations you bring against him—what authority have you for them? He is to be condemned unheard, and his religion is brought against him as a crime.

If that is what you call Christian, I'd rather be a Jew any day.'

The tone she had adopted made the old man angry. He was devotedly fond and proud of her, but he had an obstinate temper, and would not brook opposition to his wishes.

'Now, now, that's enough!' he answered. 'My word is law here, and I will stand no arguments about the matter. I don't approve of the man — that is sufficient! Neither shall my daughter know him. As for condemning him unheard, that is all rubbish. Hindes knows his character as well as I do. He says—'

'Oh! then it is to Mr Hindes I owe this unpleasant interview,' cried Jenny. 'What business has he to poke his nose into my affairs? He's always meddling in some way or another. Mr Hindes made you sell my beautiful hunter, because he said it was not safe for me to ride; and Mr Hindes prevented my accepting Lady Makewell's invitation to the Castle, on account of some absurd rumours he had

heard of her former life. But, if Mr Hindes thinks he is to be the judge of all my actions and the ruler of my destinies, he is very much mistaken, and so I will let him know before he is many days older. I won't have any man interfering with me in this way, and turning my own parents against me.'

'Don't be a fool!' exclaimed Mr Crampton, roughly. 'Hindes is the best friend you have—that any of us have—and it would be a bad day for the firm and the family, that saw our interests divided. I mentioned him as an authority for the sort of life Mr Frederick Walcheren lives, but, far from setting me against you, he has stood up for your good sense and filial obedience all through the discussion of this unfortunate affair. It is I alone—your father—who has come to the conclusion to cut Mr Walcheren's acquaintance, and now I demand your obedience to my commands. Once and for all, your implicit obedience. Do you promise it me?'

'I have no alternative!' said Jenny.

‘All the same, I must have your promise given here, before your mother and your aunt.’

‘Very well, then, I promise!’ replied the girl after a pause.

‘That is all I require,’ said the old man; ‘and now, I suppose, I can go about my business. But remember! if I ever catch you trying to outwit me by any d—d subterfuges, I will take you away from Hampstead, and you shall never see it again whilst that man is in it.’

He turned then, as if to leave the room, but, perceiving that both his wife and her sister were in tears, he thought he might have spoken too harshly to this child whom he so dearly loved, and came back again for a moment.

‘Kiss me, Jenny,’ he said; ‘I’m not angry with you, my girl, though I may have seemed so, but it’s your happiness I have at heart and not my own. There! there!’ with a sounding kiss on her cheek, ‘you won’t fret about the matter, will you? and we’ll ride over together to Winchers’ to-morrow

and secure the little mare you've set your heart on. God bless you, my dear!' and, with another kiss, he left them to themselves.

Jenny stood for a minute silent and motionless, then walked quickly towards the door, as if to return to her own room.

'Jenny, my darling,' pleaded her mother, 'you see the force of your dear father's argument, don't you?'

She went towards the girl as she spoke, and would have wound her arms about her, but Jenny pushed her impatiently aside.

'Don't bother me, mamma,' she said, 'you know how I hate a fuss. All this worry is mostly your fault, you might have prevented it if you had chosen.'

'Oh! Jenny, my dear, how?'

'Why, do you suppose I don't know it has come of some repetition of yours or Aunt Clem's? How should papa, who is all day in the city, and never goes with us anywhere in the evenings, have heard that I danced more with Fred Walcheren than any other man, unless you had told him?'

And I think it is beastly mean of you, too! Why can't I have my pleasure the same as other girls? I conclude you and papa made love enough to each other when you were young, and yet you grudge me a choice in the matter. I'm only to dance, and talk, and be agreeable with such people as you select for me. It's bitterly unfair.'

'Oh, no, darling, don't say that! Your dear father is only desirous of one thing, to promote your welfare. And Mr Walcheren is very wild, Jenny. He would not make you a good husband. Everybody says so.'

'And so my happiness is to be sacrificed because "everybody" chooses to tell lies of the man I like, and papa and you choose to believe them. Well! I sha'n't forget it in a hurry, I can tell you, mamma. And now, please let me go to my room in peace. I suppose I may claim a right to so much indulgence of my own wishes.'

'My dear girl, when have any of your wishes been ungratified, unless they were likely to prove hurtful to yourself. We

should take a knife away from a baby, my darling, however much it cried for it, for fear it should cut itself.'

'Thank you for comparing me to a baby, mamma, but I think you will find I am not quite such a child as you imagine. Anyway, I am woman enough to wish to be left alone to think over this matter by myself.'

And, without waiting for an answer, Jenny ran up the staircase, and locked herself into her bedroom.

The two ladies downstairs were left in a very uncomfortable condition.

'I hope,' remarked Mrs Crampton to her sister, 'I hope dear papa did not go too far in what he said. Jenny is so high-spirited and quick-tempered, that she might be tempted to do something wilful just because she was crossed. And if she dances with Mr Walcheren at the Bouchers' to-night, I don't know what her papa will say.'

'Oh, she would never dare to do so, surely,' replied Aunt Clem; 'she would

never fly in John's face in that manner! She is a little fond of her own way sometimes, I admit, but she has a good heart, poor darling, and says far more than she means. And John is right, Emma. Mr Walcheren is a very wild young man, and it would never do for our Jenny to marry him.'

'Of course, John is right,' acquiesced the wife; 'but I wish Jenny could see it in the same light. However, I will take care not to let her out of my sight this evening, and then it will be impossible for Mr Walcheren to get speech of her, without my overhearing what he may say.'

Meanwhile, Jenny, having reached the sanctuary of her own room, drank off her chocolate hastily, and dismissed her maid who was in attendance.

'Is my bath ready, Ellen?' she inquired; 'that is right. Well! you can go now and I will ring when I am ready to dress. Tell Brunell that I will have the Ralli cart at one.'

'Before luncheon, miss?' said the maid.

‘At one o’clock, sharp! And don’t go out of the way; I shall want you in ten minutes.’

She turned the key of her door on the inside as the maid disappeared, and, sitting down before her writing-table, drew out pen and paper, and commenced to write a letter, which ran as follows:—

‘DARLING,—There has been a row here this morning, and papa has forbidden me ever to speak to you again. What are we to do? I shall be at the Bouchers’ to-night, without fail. I must not dance with you, but, if you will be in the picture gallery after the fourth dance, I will contrive to speak to you. Oh, Fred, where is all this going to end? They shall never make me give you up, if you remain of the same mind, but open communication with you seems almost impossible. I can’t write any more, my head and my heart are both in a whirl. Ever your loving
‘JENNY.’

She sealed this letter, and directed it to

Frederick Walcheren, Esq., 308 Nevern Mansions, Earl's Court, London, and placed it on one side. Her next concern was to see in what condition this unpleasant excitement had left her. But she found no reason to complain.

The exercise of her temper had made her cheeks rosier, and lent an extra brightness to her eyes. She was glad of this—glad that she had not given way to the weakness of tears, and swelled up her eyelids and made her face look puffy. She might meet Frederick during her drive. He spent most of his spare time in wandering about Hampstead in the hopes of meeting her. But she seldom drove out until the afternoon. Still, there was just the chance of a *rencontre* with her lover, and for that chance Jenny would have taken more trouble than this.

When she came downstairs again, an hour later, dressed in a tailor-made suit of light fawn tweed, with her jaunty little felt hat on her head, and her hands in white doeskin driving-gloves, holding a hand-

some ivory-handled whip, few people would have guessed the state of excitement she was still in, she looked so fresh and lovely and smiling. In the hall she encountered her mother, who had heard the wheels of the Ralli cart draw up to the door.

‘Out so early, my darling?’ Mrs Crampton said, kindly; ‘where are you going to?’

‘For a drive,’ answered the girl curtly.

‘But doesn’t it look a little like rain,’ continued her mother timidly, for she was half afraid of her idol, particularly when the idol was put out.

‘I don’t care if it does,’ replied Jenny, in the same tone; ‘I’m not made of sugar.’

‘But take an umbrella, darling,’ said her mother, anxiously, ‘and let Brunell hold it over you, if it should be wet.’

But Miss Crampton rejected all her suggestions with scorn.

‘If it thunders and lightens, and I get wet through and go into a consumption, so much the better,’ she exclaimed impatiently.

‘ You and papa between you have contrived to make me so supremely miserable, that I don’t care what happens to me ! In fact, the sooner I’m dead the better ; and I’ve a good mind to take a dose of prussic acid and end it at once.’

This is a very usual threat of selfish and ill-tempered people, particularly if they have loving and anxious hearts to deal with. To Mrs Crampton, to whom the girl was everything in the world, Jenny’s words seems full of bitter portent.

‘ Oh ! my darling ! my darling !’ she exclaimed, in a voice of the deepest concern, ‘ don’t say such terrible things, even in jest, for Heaven’s sake ! You will break my heart, Jenny, and your poor father would go mad if he heard you speak in such an awful way. Why ! we would cut off our right hands to save you a moment’s trouble.’

‘ Yes ! it looks like it, doesn’t it ?’ said the young lady, sarcastically.

‘ My dearest, don’t discuss the subject again. Wait a little and you will see it

perhaps in a different light. My head aches so, Jenny, I am not fit to argue it with you, and you have been upset as well. Go for a nice drive, and the fresh air will make your head clearer. But be careful, my love, and don't do anything rash! I'm half afraid of those cobs, Jenny, they're so fresh and spirited.'

'Oh! you're afraid of everything,' replied her daughter in a tone of contempt; 'and as for Aunt Clem, she's alarmed at her own shadow.'

'I was never brought up to horses and dogs, as you have been, dear,' said Miss Bostock, who was standing near.

'No; nor to anything, I should think,' replied her niece, as she prepared to get into her Ralli cart. 'I often think you and mamma must have been born and reared on a desert island, you seem so utterly ignorant of the things most people do.'

With which Miss Crampton gently touched her steeds with the lash of her whip, and they went prancing down the

drive as if they intended to bolt, whilst her mother and aunt held their breath with anxiety, lest the wilful driver should come to any harm.

Jenny drove at a smart pace through the principal ways of Hampstead, whilst the pedestrians whom she passed said to each other 'There goes the beautiful Miss Crampton,' and she overheard some of their remarks and flushed with pleasure at the notice she excited. For this young lady's besetting sin was an inordinate vanity of her personal attractions, which she had cultivated to the exclusion of all the Christian graces. She was a specimen of that most odious of all modern innovations, the fast girl of the nineteenth century, and she was vulgar in consequence, for all fast women are vulgar, and obnoxious in the eyes of everybody but their male admirers. For when will men be ever sensible enough to separate the value of personal beauty and mental charm? Not while they have eyes to see. Once touch their senses, and, for the time their infatuation lasts, you can-

not convince them but that the mind and soul of their goddess equal her body in charm. Frederick Walcheren was infatuated with the beauty of this girl, and he believed her disposition to be all that was good and lovable as well. It appeared so to him, for, whenever they met, Jenny was in her best temper, and ready to be pleased with everything. Had he even seen her, as she had been on the present occasion, rude and impertinent to her parents, cruelly sarcastic to her meek and unoffending aunt, and obstinately resolved upon having her own way, he would still have taken her part, declared her to be a suffering angel, and her father and mother most unjust and tyrannical towards her. Shakespeare never wrote a greater truism than when he made Rosalind declare that 'Love is a madness,' a madness that blinds our vision, distorts our judgment, and makes all things, not only apparently, but actually, different from what they are; when the rose-coloured spectacles have been torn by circumstance from our eyes, and we wonder we could ever

have been such egregious fools as to think that they were otherwise.

Miss Crampton, then, with her heart on fire and her soul up in arms, stopped at the first pillar-box she passed, and bade Brunell post the letter which she gave him, the letter she had written in her bedroom and which she knew would reach town before Mr Walcheren left it to meet her at the house of their mutual friends, the Bouchers.

And as she flew over the highway, one sentence kept revolving itself over and over in her mind, and the burden of it was, 'I will never give him up, I will never give him up.'

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Miss Crampton's letter reached the hands of Mr Frederick Walcheren, it was by the four o'clock post, and that gentleman was lying on a couch in his apartments in Nevern Mansions. He was a handsome man of about thirty, with dark eyes and hair, and classical features, set in a pale, clear complexion. He was clean shorn, except for a small, soft moustache, and the possessor of a tall, lithe figure. He had an ample fortune, having inherited about two thousand a year from an old Catholic godfather, who died when Frederick was quite an infant, and who had expressed a wish in his will that his godson and heir should enter the church, or, at all events, benefit

the church by founding some religious institution at his own death, with the fortune he left in his charge. But the old gentleman could hardly have chosen a worse guardian of his property. No embargo had been laid on the young man spending his money as he chose, and his choice was to spend it on himself and the companions whom he delighted to honour. His little flat in Earl's Court was only a *pied à terre*. His home may have been said to exist at Epsom, Goodwood, Newmarket, or anyone of the other race-courses in England. He was also to be met periodically at Monte Carlo or Paris. Occasionally he would take a fancy to run over to New York or San Francisco, but, wherever he pitched his tent, one might be sure there were plenty of opportunities for gambling and speculation. Not but what Frederick Walcheren was a perfectly honourable man; but he could not live (or he thought he could not live) without excitement of some sort, and he loved

the uncertainty and risk of betting and play.

His money and his good looks had rendered him an easy prey to the harpies of the other sex, and had landed him into one or two scrapes with more respectable women. His cousin, Philip, had often had to be the go-between and peacemaker with sundry fair damsels, who were violently bent on a breach of promise case, or a horse-whipping through means of their next friend.

Mr Philip Walcheren was quite a different sort of character from his cousin. Married, and the father of a family, a staunch Catholic, steady and prosperous in his business as a solicitor, he was almost a pattern man, and Frederick's goings-on were a marvel and a misery to him. He and his director, Father Tasker, were constantly talking over the other man, and wondering by what means they could dissuade him from his follies, and induce him to lead a more sober

life. But, as yet, their exhortations and entreaties had been of no avail. Frederick laughed at their cautions, and pooh-poohed their predictions of a repentant future. He meant to live his life, he told them, and asked for no one's pity or advice. He was in reality, what Mr Crampton and Henry Hindes had called him, a dissolute and irreclaimable spend-thrift, and not fit to be the husband of any girl.

Still, he was pleasant and fascinating, and the *beau sexe* spoilt him, to a woman. As he lay indolently on his couch this afternoon, turning Jenny's letter over and over in his hands, his thoughts were much the same as hers had been, for of all the femininities he had ever met, and trifled with, she was the only one who had seriously touched his heart. Women as handsome as Jenny, and far more amiable, had been ready, before now, to throw themselves at his feet, but they had had no power to move him. But for this petulant, spoilt, and rather underbred, girl, he would have

laid down his life. Who can account for anomalies? Is love—such love as has its origin in admiration—a spiritual passion, or is it the force of two magnetisms that attract each to each, beyond the power of the individual to oppose? From the strange choices we see made in this world, it would seem so. Anyway, this is how Frederick Walcheren felt for Jenny Crampton—that he would die sooner than give her up. She seemed, in the short time they had known each other, to have grown into his life—to have become part of it, indeed—so that he could no longer imagine living without her. He kept saying to himself all the while, just as she had done,—‘I will not give her up for any man or woman upon earth. What do I care about the old wool-stapler raving? Let him rave. I will carry her off before his very eyes. But she shall be mine; in fact, she *is* mine in heart and soul, and I defy the whole world to separate us.’

And, just at that moment, there sounded a double knock on his outer door, and his

man appeared to usher in his cousin, Philip Walcheren and Father Tasker.

Frederick sprung to his feet. The instincts of a born Catholic were still strong in him, and, though he never went to confession or mass, he always showed a proper deference for the clergy. Added to which, Father Tasker was an old friend of his family.

‘How are you, Father,’ he said, ‘I’m glad to see you. Pray take the arm-chair. Well, Philip! all right at home?’

‘Quite right, thank you, Frederick,’ replied his cousin; ‘I was on my way to have a talk with you when I met Father Tasker, so we came together.’

‘I’m delighted to see you both,’ said Frederick, ‘what can I give you? I know that it is no use my offering the father a brandy-and-soda, but, if you will not take one, Philip, my man shall get some tea ready in half a minute.’

‘I don’t think we have time for either,’ replied Philip Walcheren. ‘I have only about ten minutes to spare, and the Father

honours me with his company at dinner to-night, so I think Marion will be disappointed if I deprive her of her five-o'clock tea gossip with him. She is, doubtless, anxiously awaiting us now. But I felt I could not pass another night without asking you, Frederick, if a rumour which I have heard concerning you is true.'

'What's up now?' demanded his cousin.

'I met young Fellows in the city this afternoon, Mrs Bouchers' brother, you know, and he told me that it is commonly said in Hampstead that you are engaged, or about to be engaged, to Miss Crampton.'

'What of it?' said Frederick carelessly.

'Surely it is not true! Surely, with your antecedents, Frederick, you are not thinking of marrying any respectable woman!'

'Would you prefer my marrying a disreputable one, then, Philip?'

'Most certainly not! What I mean is, that, under the circumstances, you have no right to marry at all. How can you go up to God's holy altar with any woman, whilst that unfortunate girl down at Luton is even

now expiating the awful sin you led her into?’

‘Of course, it is quite impossible that it was she who led me instead of the other way?’ said Frederick, interrogatively.

‘Whosoever fault it may have been in the first instance, you know that you are responsible now.’

‘And I am quite ready to meet my responsibilities. Do you want me to marry the straw-plaiter down at Luton?’

‘No, no! I want you to do nothing but alter your mode of living, Frederick, and try and be a decent member of society. It is terrible to think how you go on, without care for yourself or others, without a thought of God, or the future that lies before you. If poor Sir Frederick Ascher had only foreseen the uses his money would have been put to, he would have thought twice before he left it to you.’

‘Yes! but, luckily for me, he didn’t foresee, so I can do as I like about it. Has Father Tasker a lecture in store for me as

well?' inquired Frederick, turning to the priest.

'No! my son, we are not in the confessional, where I could wish we met oftener; but I would like to remind you that, although your late godfather made no actual conditions regarding the expenditure of the fortune he left you, yet his wishes, that it should be devoted to the church, were so strongly expressed, as almost to amount to a demand, and I cannot believe that any blessing will follow a different disposition of it.'

'I have confessed to no intention of marrying, remember, but should I ever do so, my wife will be my church, and I shall settle my money upon her.'

But this was a blasphemy that neither Philip Walcheren nor the priest could pass over in silence.

'Be careful, my son, be careful,' cried the one, 'lest the curse of Heaven, and the church you despise, are both provoked against you.'

'I cannot believe, Frederick, that you

seriously mean what you say,' exclaimed his cousin. 'The money is only yours for your lifetime, and, if you do not dedicate it to the holy church at your death, some fearful calamity will surely overtake you, or those to whom you wrongfully give it.'

'Nonsense!' replied Frederick; 'I suppose you both mean well, but I would rather you understood me at once. As matters stand at present, I have not the slightest intention of leaving my money to the church. My godfather—peace to his ashes!—left it to me, and I recognise but one authority in the matter, and that is the law, which is on my side. I wonder, by the way, Philip, that you stick up so badly for the stability of the profession by which you live!'

'Every consideration must give way to the claims of the church, Frederick!'

'Well, I don't agree with you. I think Mother Church has feathered her own nest pretty well, considering her claims to humility and poverty. In my idea, my

own nest will have the prior claim on my indulgence !’

‘So you are really contemplating matrimony, Frederick,’ said Philip. ‘I wonder you can dare to enter a church under the circumstances, lest the walls and roof should fall in upon you.’

‘Perhaps I shall be married in a registrar’s office,’ responded Frederick lightly ; but the jest was so ill-timed that neither of his hearers commented upon it.

‘With the fact of that misguided female down at Luton, you are about to commit a great sacrilege, my son, in taking the sacrament of matrimony on yourself!’ remarked Father Tasker.

‘Well, really, father, I must say you and Philip are both rather hard on me ! You have been reproaching me for my loose style of living for years past, and begging me to reform, and now, when you hear a rumour—merely a rumour, remember—that I’m about to forsake the devil and all his ways, and become a steady married man, like my good cousin here, you attack

me as if I had just formed a fresh *liason* instead. Why shouldn't I marry like a good boy, as well as Philip, who is, I know, a pattern of propriety. Why shouldn't I walk to mass every Sunday morning, with a little boy by one hand and a little girl by the other? It doesn't seem as if I could please you anyway.'

'You mistake both me and your cousin, my son,' replied the priest. 'It is not that we are not most anxious to see you turn over a new leaf and lead a pure life, but marriage is assuredly a condition of great temptation for a man situated as you are. It will bring cares and expenses with it, and your mind will be filled with the thought of providing for the future of your family. You have been brought up to no profession, for your sainted mother had no idea that you would be anything but a priest, and that your godfather's fortune would go as he wished it should do, to our holy church. But since you elected otherwise, there is but one honest course for you to pursue, and that

is, to remain single, and preserve your money intact for the purpose for which your godfather left it to you. Marriage will interfere with this, therefore marriage is not for you !’

At this juncture Frederick’s temper got the better of his judgment.

‘ Then I’m d—d if the church shall have the money,’ he exclaimed loudly ; ‘ all your advice, and precepts, and exhortations to a purer life count for nothing ; they are only made so you may hear yourselves talk, and plume yourselves with the idea of how much better men you are than myself. But this matter is in my own jurisdiction, thank goodness, and I shall do exactly as I choose about it. I shall marry, or remain single, as pleases me, but, whatever I may do, the church doesn’t get my money, so you may put that thought out of your heads at once. I’ll leave it to the Salvation Army, or the Home for Lost Dogs, first.’

He had thrown himself into a passion by this time, and he walked quickly up

and down his little room in order to cool his temper. Philip Walcheren looked as if he expected the heavens to open and strike his cousin dead for the utterance of such blasphemy, and the priest rose and prepared to shake the dust of those apartments off his feet.

‘Mark my words,’ he said solemnly, as he turned to leave the room, ‘God will not be mocked, Frederick Walcheren. He knows all our hearts, and He will avenge himself. Good-morning.’

And with that Father Tasker disappeared.

‘For shame!’ cried Philip, as he prepared to follow him, ‘for shame, Frederick. You may have law on your side, but you have neither right nor conscience. You have not told me whether the rumour I mentioned is true or false, but, if it is true, and you have any such intention in your head, pause, I beseech you, before you carry it into effect, or some fearful calamity will follow it. You have defied our holy church, and God will defend her

rights. I shall not come again until you send for me.'

And in another moment the room was clear.

'Here, Watson,' called Frederick to his man, 'bring me a whisky - and - soda. I declare,' he continued to himself, 'if their twaddle has not made me quite uncomfortable. What on earth did that old fool, my godfather, mean by not making his will decisive one way or the other? *I* a priest, indeed! No. I mean to live a rather jollier life than that comes to. And there is only one other decent alternative, to marry the girl I love, and rear a family for the benefit of the State. And how can I do that without money? It is ridiculous to think of.'

Still, with the superstitious ideas which the Catholic religion infuses in all her followers, with the childish inbred fear of the priestly power to save or damn, with the fear of purgatory and a fiery hell, and becoming an outcast from salvation for ever, Frederick Walcheren did not

feel quite comfortable, though he tried to laugh the feeling off, and was as resolute as before, that no power in heaven or earth should separate him from Jenny Crampton.

‘They are against us on every side,’ he thought, ‘but that fact will only make me the more determined to have her. My beautiful darling! The most beautiful woman, in my eyes, that I have ever met. Why, Father Tasker himself couldn’t resist her, if she stood on one side and hell on the other. What time is it, Watson? Six thirty? By Jove! if I don’t hurry up I shall get no dinner before I start for the Bouchers’.

‘Going to Hampstead again to-night, sir?’ asked Watson, as he laid out his master’s dress clothes upon the bed.

How well our servants know where we go, and who we go to see, and what we do it for.

‘Yes,’ replied Frederick, ‘to Mrs Bouchers’ dance. You needn’t sit up for me, Watson, for I shall be very late.

Order the brougham to call for me at Simpson's at nine o'clock. I shall go on straight from there.'

He hurried into his dress clothes, for he was determined that nothing should make him late that night, for fear he should miss the interview in the picture gallery after the fourth dance.

The picture gallery at the Bouchers' was very seldom entered by any of their dancing guests, being some way removed from the ballroom, but both Jenny and Mr Walcheren, being intimate friends at the house, knew it well.

Frederick thought rightly that, since a prohibition had gone forth against his dancing with the girl of his heart, it would be more prudent if he did not put in an appearance to the ballroom till after he had held the interview with Jenny. So, when he presented himself at the house, between nine and ten o'clock, and had divested himself of his crush hat and overcoat, he peeped into the dancing room to see how far the evening had

advanced. The number two had just been placed above the bandstand, so he concluded he had at least half an hour to wait before Jenny could join him, and turned away again to seek the solitude of the picture gallery until the time of meeting had arrived.

But he reckoned without his host. Henry Hindes, who had been one of the earliest arrivals, and on the express look-out for Walcheren, spied him as soon as he looked into the room, and, rising quietly, followed him out. So, as soon as Frederick had reached the picture gallery, he heard a step in his rear, and, turning with annoyance to see who had discovered the retreat besides himself, met the outstretched hand and smiling glance of Mr Hindes. Mr Walcheren could not fail to return his civilities, but he was infinitely vexed. Of all the people he knew, he would rather have encountered anyone than Mr Hindes.

Not only because he was so intimately connected with the Cramptons, and, un-

doubtedly, knew most of the family secrets, but also because Frederick had conceived an unaccountable aversion for him. He did not know *why* himself. Henry Hindes had always been courteous and polite to him, far more so, indeed, than Mr Crampton, who invariably treated a Roman Catholic as if his religion were his own fault, and he was sinning every day that he didn't change it. Hindes, on the contrary, had no scruples on the score of difference of faith, and no right to object to the young man because he courted Jenny Crampton. He had always spoken and behaved to him as one gentleman should to another, and yet Walcheren hated him. Now, as he accepted his hand and asked after his well-doing, he would have liked to strike him across his smooth, smiling face instead. Mr Hindes, having no idea that the young man was waiting to see Miss Crampton, had thought this would be an excellent opportunity for him to fulfil the promise

made to his partner, and let Mr Walcheren know how utterly hopeless his suit was.

‘How are you, Walcheren?’ he said, cordially, as he came up with him. ‘You don’t mean to tell me you are going to eschew dancing to-night, when there are so many pretty girls doing “wallflowers”? I saw you look into the ballroom and disappear again, and wondered if you had found your way to a buffet and a whisky-and-soda. I shouldn’t mind following you if you have, for the night is very warm and I am very thirsty.’

‘No, I had no such intention,’ answered Walcheren, in a tone of annoyance. ‘I fancy it is rather too early for that game. I came in here because I have a slight headache, and thought the cool and quiet might charm it away before I encountered the heat and glare of the ballroom.’

‘To be sure, and I daresay it will. This is a charming place, though one cannot see much of the pictures by night. It is in

semi-darkness. I do not suppose the Bouchers intend their guests to use it on such an occasion as this, or they would have it better lighted.'

'Perhaps not,' replied Walcheren. 'But I am an old friend of the family, and consider myself privileged to do as I like.'

'Oh! I am not finding fault with your decision, my dear fellow; on the contrary, I am very glad of the opportunity of a few words in private with you. It is not often that my wife can drag me out to a dance, and, to tell you the honest truth, I came here this evening expressly to see you.'

'To see *me*?' echoed Walcheren in astonishment. 'Why, what on earth can you have to say to me?'

'Nothing on my account, my dear friend, unless it were to tell you (what I hope you know) that I have always been pleased to welcome you to my house, and always shall be. But I am, as I think you are aware, a very intimate friend of Mr and Mrs

Crampton, who were, indeed, the intimate friends also of my father before me, and who have known me almost from a child.'

'I know it,' replied Frederick. 'What of it?'

'Mr Crampton sent for me before ten o'clock this morning, and I found him in the greatest distress. His wife had intercepted a letter from you to Miss Crampton, and the contents had terribly upset him.'

'Passing over the fact that I consider it a breach of honour to pry into the private correspondence of anybody, I am not aware that there was anything in the letter alluded to that was calculated to upset Mr Crampton,' said Frederick.

'I don't sanction the proceeding, my dear Walcheren; I am only telling you the facts. The old gentleman was more than upset; he was terribly angry, and he made his daughter give him a solemn promise not see (of her own free will), or speak, or write to you again.'

‘And pray, may I ask,’ cried Frederick Walcheren in a sudden fury, ‘what business it is of yours, Mr Hindes, to mention the subject to me?’

‘None at all, but I owe it to the entreaty of my friends. Both Mr and Mrs Crampton have begged me to convey their wishes to you. They have derived so much pleasure from your society as an acquaintance, and think so highly of your intentions with regard to their daughter, that they dreaded the task of telling you personally, that they can never give their sanction to a marriage between you.’

‘Perhaps, as they told you so much, they were good enough to add their reasons for so extraordinary a decision,’ exclaimed Walcheren, in a tone of sarcasm.

‘Certainly they did, and it is one with which you cannot find serious fault. The objection is your religion. Mr Crampton will never allow his daughter to inter-marry with a Catholic, and his decision is irrevocable. Since your feelings for Miss Crampton cannot have gone beyond admiration,

considering the short time you have known her, he thought it best you should hear his decision at once, before any mischief is done on either side.'

'And Miss Crampton's feelings? Are they not to be taken into consideration also?'

'Most certainly! There is nothing on earth Mr Crampton cares for so much as his only child! She is his heiress, as doubtless you know, but he will leave her nothing if she marries against his wishes. He is very obstinate when thwarted, and very unrelenting. And Miss Crampton would hardly be so foolish as to give up her fortune, as well as her parents, at one blow. Under these circumstances, I hope you will not take offence, my dear Walcheren, if I ask you, in his name, to relinquish your acquaintanceship with Miss Crampton, and to leave off visiting at the house. It is an unpleasant task my friends have set me, but I have done it for their sakes, and without any ulterior feeling against yourself. I have not a daughter

old enough to aspire to your hand,' said Henry Hindes, smiling, 'but if I had, I am not sure that I should deliver such a message to you on my own account!'

But Frederick Walcheren took no notice of this little sop for Cerberus.

'Have the Cramptons any other objection to me besides that of my religion?' he asked presently.

'Well! my dear fellow,' replied Henry Hindes, dubiously, 'rumours have been conveyed to them of your life having been a little fast, not more than that of other men of the world, I daresay, but these old people do not regard such matters with the same eyes that you and I should do. They have only mixed in a certain society, you see, and know little of the sayings and doings of fashionable men and women. They have very strict notions concerning propriety, and you cannot shake their opinions on the subject. But the real objection is to your religion. *That* is insurmountable! They will never overlook it.'

‘It is most unfair,’ exclaimed Frederick; ‘how is a man to help what his parents chose to make him? Besides, I have no religion at all! I believe in nothing, not a God, nor a Hereafter, nor a Heaven, nor a Hell! Will that suit them better?’

Mr Hindes laughed heartily at the idea.

‘Pray don’t hint at such a thing, Walcheren,’ he said, ‘or they would think you were the old gentleman himself! But we must really talk seriously about this matter. Mr Crampton is obdurate, and will remain so. He declares that unless you will give your promise not to interfere with his daughter for the future, he will take her away from Hampstead and out of your reach, and keep her there until one of you is married. I am sure you are too much a gentleman and man of honour to upset a whole family in that way, in order to gratify your spite against them. For it will not lead to your being readmitted to the house, and Miss Crampton will be strictly watched for the future.’

Frederick Walcheren was thinking very

deeply on the matter, and his thoughts ran thus, 'I must overcome these people by diplomacy. If I refuse to give this promise, I shall be watched so closely that I shall never get speech of Jenny again; whereas, if I pretend to give in to their demands, I shall throw them off their guard. And the first thing I must do is to get rid of this fellow!' Aloud he said,—

'I am deeply grieved to hear of Mr Crampton's decision, but I see the wisdom of it. Naturally, I admire Miss Crampton very much, I wonder who doesn't, but, to tell truth, I anticipated a great deal of opposition from my own family, if it ever came to anything serious. They are as staunch for the old faith as ever Mr Crampton can be for his. Mixed marriages are, after all, a mistake. I am glad, therefore, that you have spoken so frankly and openly to me, and I thank you for it. Will you tell Mr Crampton that I acquiesce in his decision, and willingly give my promise not to intrude upon his daughter, or himself, again. You

have been a true friend to both of us, Hindes. Accept my hand on it. And now I think I will just go home without running the risk of encountering *la belle* Jenny. It will please Mr Crampton if he hears that I have done so. And my headache really unfits me for any violent exercise. Good-night. Are you going back to the ballroom? If so, we will walk to the front of the house together.'

'Yes; I must go back to wait for my wife, who is enjoying herself just like a girl. I shall not say a word to Miss Crampton of having seen you. It will be better to let her think you have been prevented attending the party.'

'Most certainly, and assure Mr Crampton that he has nothing to fear from me. Good-night again,' and the two men parted at the hall door, with a shake of the hand.

Frederick Walcheren went forth into the darkness, whilst Henry Hindes, congratulating himself on the diplomatic manner in which he had executed his

embassage, and the easy victory he had gained over the enemy, re-entered the ballroom, and took his seat there, with the most perfect assurance that all danger was over

CHAPTER IV.

BUT he did not quite know Frederick Walcheren. Perhaps, also, he did not how know cunning Love makes a man. The younger man had assumed his overcoat and hat, and gone forth at the hall door, as if he had but one intention—to seek the railway station, since his brougham had returned to town. But, once clear of the scrutiny of the servants, he skirted the house on the left side, and passed from the front garden to the back, which is easily done in most suburban houses. This brought him on to a large lawn, from which the interior of the lighted ballroom might be easily seen through the open windows. Also, by turning the other corner of the

mansion, he could, by pressing his face against the glass, see if the picture gallery was occupied or not, though he remained himself unseen. The windows of this room were also thrown open, and Frederick waited at one of them until he saw the white-robed figure of Jenny Crampton steal in, and glance furtively around as if in search of him.

‘Jenny, Jenny,’ he called softly, lest she should be followed by the friend of the family, ‘Jenny, my love, come here, to this window.’

‘What is this?’ cried the girl as she perceived him; ‘why are you here? Is anything wrong?’

‘Nothing is wrong whilst you love me,’ said Frederick, ‘but we are watched, darling, so I have pretended to go home again. Have you the pluck to join me in the garden? There are any number of arbours here where we can talk undisturbed.’

‘Pluck,’ cried Jenny, jumping on the window sill, ‘of course I have. Pluck

enough to follow you over a precipice, if you wish me to do so.

‘You angel. I will ask you to take no more dangerous leap than into my arms. But were you seen? Did anyone follow you? We must not have an open row.’

‘No, no one even saw me leave the ballroom, for I was at the buffet with Captain Rawson, when number five dance struck up, so I told him to go and find his partner and leave mine to seek me out. And as soon as his back was turned I slipped out here.’

‘You dear girl! Give me your hand, then, and jump out; there is a lovely seat under that acacia tree—but what will you say if your mother asks where you have been?’

‘That I have been strolling in the garden with my partner. She will think it was Captain Rawson; but she will not ask. She is used to my vagaries, and lets me do just as I choose.’

‘But, darling, they won’t let you do that any longer, I’m afraid. I’ve had a lecture

as well as you, Jenny. Mr Hindes followed me to the picture gallery just now, by your father's request, and made me promise I would give up all pretensions to your hand, and leave off visiting at your house.'

'And do you mean to keep your promise?' inquired the girl, pouting.

'Not unless you tell me to do so, Jenny; I love you too much for that. I only did it to prevent a row, for if Mr Crampton carried his threat of taking you away from Hampstead into execution, I might find it very difficult to have any communication with you again.'

'But what is the good of my staying here if I am never to see you, Fred?' asked Jenny.

'That depends upon yourself, my darling; you can't do it from your father's house, that's certain.'

'Who's from, then?' said Jenny.

'From mine, sweetheart! Don't think me very bold, but, if you love me as you say, you will marry me whether your parents give their consent or not.'

‘So I will, if you will only tell me how, Fred.’

‘We must elope together, dearest; heaps of husbands and wives have done it before us, and been none the worse. Your father says that if you marry without his consent, he will leave you none of his money; that is a thing you must take into serious consideration, before you give me your answer. I have enough for both of us, still, you would be a richer woman if you remained your father’s heiress; his fortune cannot be less than ten thousand a year, whilst mine is only two thousand.’

‘What do I care for money in comparison with you, Fred?’ whispered Jenny.

‘That’s my own true girl,’ he answered, folding her closely to him, ‘and once you have made up your mind to marry me without your father’s consent, the rest is easy enough. Tell me to get a licence, and to give notice at the nearest registrar’s office to my place, and you have only to

arrange how you can join me, so as to give us a few hours' start of Mr Crampton, and I will have you out of his reach and power before the day is over.'

'To join you, dearest, is easily managed,' replied the girl. 'I must take a few things with me, you know, Fred! To run away in the clothes I stand up in, would be altogether too romantic for the nineteenth century. But I can send a box to my dressmaker's, under pretence of wanting some dresses altered—no one interferes with my dress at home—and then, when you let me know which day I am to be in town, I will drive myself over, as if to go shopping; tell Brunnel to put the cobs up for a few hours, and call for me at Madame Costello's at 5 o'clock, and *apres ça, le deluge!*'

'A deluge of love, my darling—a life of happiness, during which I shall have but one thought—one aspiration—how I can best repay my darling angel for the sacrifice she has made for me. And, perhaps, after a time, your parents will come

round. I cannot believe but that they will forgive our temerity in the end, and all will be merry as a marriage bell.'

'Oh! poor mamma has nothing to do with it, Fred. I honestly believe she would let me marry a crossing-sweeper if I had set my heart upon it. I never remember her saying "No" to me since I was a baby. It is papa who is making all the fuss, and he is as obstinate as a pig. He thinks it is a sign of his own religion, to kick up such a dust about your being a Catholic, but I say he only proves he is no Christian by it. What can it signify if one is a Protestant or a Catholic? I am sure, for my own part, I would as soon be one as the other, and preferably neither. If you wish me to become a Catholic, Fred, I will to please you, but I hope you won't expect me to go to church and hear sermons, for if there is one thing beyond another for which I long to get married, it is to have my liberty in such matters. Papa and mamma have sickened me of

church-going. Aunt Clem, too, who is so very pious, has a face long enough to turn the milk sour. It is not encouraging to a girl to go and do likewise.'

Frederick Walcheren laughed as he kissed the speaker.

'My darling!' he answered, 'I daresay your people have warned you that I am not a particularly good young man, but I can boast of one merit—I have never pretended to be better than I am. My cousin, Philip, and his great friend, Father Tasker, consider me a lost soul, but they cannot say that I am a dishonest one. They have heard some rumour—how, Heaven only knows—that I am very *épris* in a certain quarter, and put in an appearance at my rooms this afternoon to learn if it was true that I contemplated matrimony. You may take your oath that I did not gratify their curiosity. They want to get me into the church, so that they may grab my money. They've been trying it on for years, but this fish won't bite!'

‘But, Fred, darling, would anything on earth ever make you go into the church?’ inquired Jenny, rather anxiously.

‘Nothing on earth,’ he replied, quickly; but, after a slight pause, he added, ‘at least only *one* thing, and that is too dreadful to contemplate. If you were taken from me, my treasure—if anything happened to you and I were left alone—I should be mad enough for anything—even to go into a monastery, and sacrifice every farthing I possess. What good would money be to me without my love?’

He pressed her closely to him as he spoke, and the two young faces were laid against each other, and the two young forms seemed to melt for a moment into one. But in another moment Jenny had sprung up to a standing position.

‘I must go, dear Fred,’ she exclaimed, ‘or they will miss me, and Mr Hindes may be sent to find out where I am. Good-bye, good-bye, my darling. How soon do you think I shall have your letter?’

‘The day after to-morrow, love! To-

morrow morning I shall be in Doctors' Commons for the licence, and will wire you simply, "All right, Costello." Then, should the telegram fall into other hands, it will be thought to come from the dress-maker. On receipt of this, you must drive over on the following day to Madame Costello's, and leave your box there, and as soon as you have dismissed Brunell and the trap, I will take you to the registrar's office, and, when the knot is securely tied, we will pick up the box and be off to Dover. Will that suit your ladyship? Brunell will call for you at Costello's at five o'clock, and, after waiting about for a considerable time, will return to Hampstead and give the alarm. By which time my wife and I will be enjoying our dinner at the Castle Warden, and laughing over the adventures of our wedding-day.'

'Oh, Fred, it seems too good to come true,' said the girl, with a slight shiver.

'Nonsense, my dearest. It will come true, sure enough. But you are cold, my pretty Jenny. I have been a selfish

brute to keep you out here so long. Let me take you back to the picture gallery. Or is it wiser you should go alone? Good-night, then, and God bless you. Give me one kiss, and don't forget to meet me the day after you receive that wire!

‘As if I *could* forget,’ replied the girl reproachfully, as she raised her face for her lover's embrace, and, with his assistance, re-entered the picture gallery, and walked slowly back to the ballroom, to tell her mother she had such a terrible fit of neuralgia, she would rather return home at once.

Mr and Mrs Hindes, who were seated near Mrs Crampton, were all solicitude for her assumed indisposition, and Mr Hindes suggested taking her for a turn in the fresh air to see if the change from the heated ballroom would relieve her. Mrs Hindes, a tall, slight woman, with dark eyes and hair, and a graceful figure, who was really attached to Jenny, inquired with whom she had been dancing

the last set, as she had looked for her in vain.

‘I have not been dancing at all,’ replied Jenny, boldly; ‘I have been sitting in the picture gallery with Lord Craven, but my head gets worse instead of better. Come along, mother, the carriage must be waiting for us by this time, and I am tired to death. I want to get to bed.’

‘Certainly, my love,’ replied Mrs Crampton, with her usual lamb-like acquiescence to all her daughter’s demands; ‘perhaps Mr Hindes will be good enough to see us to the carriage.’

And Henry Hindes, who was convinced that Miss Crampton’s neuralgia was due to Mr Walcheren’s defalcation, smiled inwardly, and conducted the ladies to their barouche, with much satisfaction that he had conducted the business he had taken on himself so successfully.

When Jenny Crampton reached home and found herself in the seclusion of her bedroom, she did not give way to any access of nervous agitation, or feel

any trepidation at the thoughts of the important step which she had taken on herself. That might be all very well for a damsel of romance of a hundred years ago, but it is not the way the young women of the present day manage their affairs. They are too strong-minded, to cry and shake and faint over the deeds they have put their sign and seal to. Jenny had made an appeal to become the wife of Mr Walcheren in a fair way, and her request had been denied her, for what she considered a frivolous objection. She knew there was no chance of altering her father's decision, and having always been given her own way since a child, she determined to take it now. She regretted having to be married privately, but she saw no wrong in it. Her parents might be sorry when they heard of it, but they had brought it on themselves. She was not going to keep Frederick waiting for an indefinite period, and perhaps lose him altogether, because her father did not like Roman

Catholics as well as he did Protestants. *She* didn't object to his religion, and she was the principal party concerned, so the young lady looked out the dresses she wished to take with her, and made her maid Ellen pack them in the box to take to the dressmaker's, and, when the key was in her own hands, she unlocked it again and added the articles of linen and jewellery that she needed, and managed the whole affair as coolly as if she had been preparing for elopements all her life. On the Friday—it was on a Thursday that she received the wire to tell her all was right, and it was on a Friday that her ill-regulated marriage took place—she dressed herself in her most becoming tailor-made costume, and drove gaily off to town, with a wave of her hand and a crack of her whip as a last adieu to the mother and aunt who loved her devotedly. She had promised them privately that she would be back to luncheon, unless her cousins, the Burtons, were at home again (which

she did not anticipate), and pressed her to stay the afternoon.

‘But, Jenny, love!’ expostulated her mother, ‘don’t stay later than two, even if they do! Pray be home before papa comes back from the city. Remember how very particular he is about your driving in town by yourself, and I’m afraid he may blame me, if he finds I have let you go with only Brunell.’

‘My dear mother, as if Brunell were not a better protection for me than fifty fat old men like papa. Now, don’t worry, there’s a good creature, for I shall be back long before dinner time, but you know what Costello is, and how difficult it is to get away from her. And perhaps I sha’n’t go to the Burtons at all. So keep up your pecker, and don’t expect me till you see me. Good-bye,’ and with a flourish she was off.

She drove rapidly to Kensington, and, on arrival, directed her groom to put up the cobs and get himself some dinner, and call for her at Mrs Burton’s house in

Cromwell Road at five o'clock. The man touched his hat, the box was lifted out, and Miss Jenny entered the dress-maker's abode.

'Madame Costello,' she commenced, 'this is a box of things belonging to my cousin, Miss Burton, which I am just going to take to her in Cromwell Road. I have brought it here first that you may take out the canvas dress you made for me, and which is just a trifle tight under the arms. No, I have no time to have it fitted on, thank you. Tell the dressmaker to let it out half an inch under both sleeves. That will be quite sufficient.'

And, unlocking the box, the little diplomatist took out an old dress, which she had laid at the top, and locked the rest of its contents up again. Frederick Walcheren was waiting for her round the corner, she had spied him as she drove up to the door.

'My cousin is waiting to take me on to Cromwell Road,' she said to Madame Costello, as she beckoned him to advance.

‘Ah, Fred,’ she continued, ‘you must call a cab for me, for I have been obliged to send the trap on to pick up papa, who wishes to join us. Have you one ready? That’s right. Good - morning, Madame Costello. You needn’t hurry with the alterations, for I shall not want that dress again just yet.’

And with that Miss Crampton entered the cab and was soon whirling away to the registrar’s office.

‘I never saw anything more neatly managed in my life,’ was her first remark. ‘Mamma has reason not to expect me home till five or six. I told Brunell not to call for me at Cromwell Road till five, so he can’t be back in Hampstead till six or seven, and by that time—’

‘By that time you will be Mrs Frederick Walcheren past all recall,’ said her lover, joyfully.

But at that the girl seemed suddenly to lose her self-possession for the first time.

‘Oh! Fred,’ she cried, ‘what am I

doing? Oh! do stop and let me out before it is too late! I was mad to come! It is too wicked! My people will never forgive me,' and she struggled to loose herself from his detaining clasp.

'Jenny, my dearest,' he exclaimed, 'be reasonable, for my sake, do! It is too late to go back now. I have made every arrangement for our staying at the Castle Warden Hotel. Besides, would you disappoint me in so terrible a manner, after having passed your plighted word to be my wife? I am sure you won't! What should I do without you, Jenny? What would you do without me? If we part now, it must be for ever! Don't make both our lives unhappy for a little want of courage.'

'No, no, I must go on, I feel it! I cannot live without you, Fred. I love you too dearly! Do just as you will with me!'

'I had a little difficulty with the licence business yesterday,' he whispered, as they travelled onwards; 'they wanted to have

the written consent of your guardians, or my assurance that you were of age, so I swore you were. It was the only way out of it, my darling, and quite justifiable, in my eyes, under the circumstances; but I thought I would put you on your guard in case the registrar put any awkward questions to you concerning it.

‘It doesn’t signify,’ replied the girl in a dejected tone. Now that the goal of her desires was so nearly reached, her high spirits seemed all to have evaporated, and she was trembling and nervous. I have had to tell so many lies to manage the business, that one more or less cannot make much difference.’

‘Jenny, my own girl, what has come over you?’ asked Walcheren in some alarm. ‘Are you not well? Do you not love me as much as you thought you did? Your mood is not complimentary, dearest, to the coming ceremony. If you really repent the step you have taken, say so, and at all costs, if it breaks my heart, I will get out of the cab and you shall

return to Madame Costello's. Jenny, do you no longer wish to be my wife?"

But, at that awful alternative, Jenny's sudden weakness evaporated and she clung to her lover, as if all her hopes in this world and the next centred in him.

'Yes! yes! yes!' she exclaimed eagerly, 'you are my life—my all. I cannot live without you, or away from you. It is only a sudden fear of the consequences of this step we are taking which terrified me. It is gone now, dear Frederick, indeed it has. What fear could I have in becoming your wife. You, whom I love beyond all other things. Only, my poor parents, my poor, good mother, Fred. How I wish she had said, 'God bless you, Jenny,' as we parted. She has been such a kind mother to me, and she will miss me so. She will have nothing to occupy her thoughts, or her hands, poor mother, now I am gone. Do you think I shall ever see them again, Fred?—my parents, and poor old Aunt Clem. Do

you think my father will keep them from me *all* my life?’

She spoke so rapidly and excitedly, and she clung to him so tightly, that Frederick Walcheren feared she was what the lower orders call ‘going off her head,’ and said all he could think off to soothe her.

‘No! no! my darling girl, what can you be thinking of, to ask me such a silly question? Of course, your father will come round in time. The old gentleman is too fond and proud of you himself to hold out very long. It is *I* on whom he will pour out the vials of his wrath. Come, let me dry those tears. We are almost at the registrar’s office now, and he will think I am inveigling you into a marriage against your will if he sees you crying. Perhaps he will take it for a case of abduction, and order me to be locked up, until he has found out where you come from, and if I have carried you off by force. And then there will be the old gentleman to pay, and no pitch hot.’

Jenny laughed at the expression and let Frederick kiss away her tears, and in another half hour, they walked out of the registrar's office together man and wife.

CHAPTER V.

HENRY HINDES' house was the most remarkable in Hampstead. It was called 'The Old Hall,' and was supposed to have been built more than two hundred years before. It was situated within ten minutes' walk of Mr Crampton's place, 'The Cedars,' but the two mansions belonged to different eras of the world's history. 'The Cedars' was fitted in the most luxurious style. Everything that money could possibly buy, or build up, had been added to it, to increase its convenience and comfort. It revelled in glass houses, expensive out-buildings, swimming and other baths, and all the luxuries of the prevailing season. But everything about it was painfully new. Mr Crampton had

purchased a freehold of the ground, and built 'The Cedars' for himself, or rather for the daughter who was to come after him. Often had he said to his wife that when their Jenny married, they would find a smaller place for themselves, and make 'The Cedars' part of her marriage portion. Consequently, he had lavished money upon it, letting the builders and upholsterers have their own way in everything, because it was only so much more for Jenny, when she came, like a young queen, into the property her father's love had prepared for her.

But 'The Old Hall' was a very different sort of dwelling-place. Henry Hindes was a man of refined tastes and culture, a man who, before he had come into his father's business, had travelled much and seen the world of art and science, and cultivated his mind, and raised his ideas of beauty and workmanship. He hated business and all its details, and, had it not been for his children's sake, and the loss it would prove to them, would have sold his share of it

for whatever it might fetch, and given up his life to the pursuit of his fancy. As it was, he refreshed himself, in the intervals of less congenial work, by making his home as beautiful as he could, but in a very different fashion from that of the Cramptons.

‘The Old Hall’ had low-roofed rooms, wainscotted with black oak, into which he would not permit the innovation of gas, and ghostly corridors that ran the whole length of the building, and stained glass windows which let in very little light, and made the house dark and gloomy in the eyes of such Philistines as could not appreciate medieval customs, and the relics of barbarism which made the delight of its owner’s heart.

He was the possessor, too, of an admirable collection of paintings, mostly of grim and melancholy subjects, but valuable in their way, and well in accordance with the mummies, sarcophagæ, curious gems and stones, and other curiosities which he had gathered on his travels and stored up in

remembrance of them. His was a charming household, and his collection of odds and ends were the only gloomy things in it. His wife, Hannah Hindes, was a cultured and intelligent gentlewoman, eminently fond of him, and regarding his powerful brain and capacity for business with an admiration which bordered on reverence; and he was the father of three handsome and healthy children, all of whom he loved, and one of whom he idolised—to wit, Master Walter Hindes, his only son, an infant of some two years old.

To see Henry Hindes with this child in his fine old garden was to see him at his best—he was so partial to floriculture, and such a student of botany; though in this, as in other things, he would not allow fashion to trample sweetness and common-sense under foot. In the large, shady garden of ‘The Old Hall’ were to be found all sorts of flowers, growing together in the same bed. No ribbon borders or collections of prize begonias, or pelargoniums, of giant blossoms, or dwarfed bushes, trans-

formed it into the semblance of a nurseryman's plot of ground ; but sweet-smelling herbs grew amongst the choicer plants, and high and low bloomed side by side, as they used to do in the long ago.

In the summer weather, Henry Hindes spent almost all his spare time in his garden with his children, and was apparently quite happy with his own thoughts and them. Hannah Hindes was a woman who never grated on her husband's finer sensibilities. She was loving, tender and conscientious ; but she seldom obtruded herself or her opinions on him, and never in opposition to his own. She was always there when needed, calm and intelligent, ready to give advice but not eager to thrust it down one's throat ; a restful sort of woman for a man to come home to after a hard and perhaps harassing day's work.

And she had in her turn an admirable husband, for Mr Hindes was mild-tempered and indulgent ; never found fault with anything his wife did, or wished to do, and was always quick to think of

her comfort and that of her children.

A few mornings after the dance at the Bouchers, they were strolling together under the shade of an avenue of elm trees, which formed the approach to the house, and he was telling her of his interview with Frederick Walcheren. One of the little girls, Elsie, was holding her mother by the hand, whilst the other, Laura, was wandering in front of them, and the son and heir, was perched on his father's shoulder, enjoying a ride. In the length and breadth of England, you could hardly have found a more united, or happier family.

‘I did not much relish the task, Hannah,’ he was saying to his wife, ‘when Mr Crampton entrusted it to me, for I anticipated a tough battle with the young gentleman. A man does not particularly care to have a stranger intermeddle with his love affairs—’

‘Oh! but Mr Walcheren could never look on you as a stranger,’ interposed Mrs Hindes, ‘he must know how very intimate

you are with the family and that you have known dear Jenny almost since she was born.'

'Not quite that, Hannah,' said her husband, wincing, for he did not like to be reminded that he was 'getting on,' 'but long enough, at all events, to act as her father's ambassador. Anyhow, I thought he would resent my speaking to him, and perhaps cause a bit of a scandal; but, to my surprise, he took it so quietly and so much as a matter of course, that I begin to think he was never in earnest, and was rather glad than otherwise, of an opportunity to withdraw without dishonour.'

'Then he must be a scoundrel!' replied Mrs Hindes, with unusual vehemence for her gentle nature, 'for I am witness that he behaved to dear Jenny just as if he were in earnest. I have been with them often, *you* know, Henry, when there has been no one else by, and if ever a man pretended to be in love with a woman, Mr Walcheren did!'

‘Anyone would “spoon” a little, with such a pretty girl, if she gave him the opportunity, my dear,’ replied Mr Hindes, ‘and our dear Jenny is a bit of a flirt, you must allow that. I wouldn’t trust her with a grandfather, if I valued his peace of mind.’

‘I don’t know what you mean by “spoon,”’ said Mrs Hindes, who professed to understand no modern slang, ‘but he looked at her and spoke to her as if he loved her and wished her to love him, and, if he meant nothing by it, all I can say is that he deserves a much worse reprimand than a mere hint to cease his visits at the house. Why, he might have broken darling Jenny’s heart!’

‘What do you mean?’ exclaimed her husband; ‘she doesn’t care for the fellow!’

‘Who can say if she cares for him or not, Henry? Women don’t run about, as a rule, telling everyone they meet of their predilections for gentlemen who have not yet proposed for them.’

‘But, good God! do you mean to insinuate that the girl’s happiness is likely to be affected by this business? You must be mistaken! Jenny would never be such a fool as to risk losing all her father’s money for the sake of the first young jackanapes who says he loves her!’

‘She may like the jackanapes better than the money, Henry. I don’t think women stick at much where their hearts are concerned. Besides, has not Mr Walcheren a fortune of his own?’

‘Perhaps—I don’t know—unless he has already made ducks and drakes of it,’ replied Henry Hindes, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. ‘But Jenny has never thought of him seriously, I am sure of it! Her father was telling me only yesterday, that her demeanour has not changed in the least since he told her she must give him up, but is as cheerful and lively as usual. That doesn’t look as if she was very miserable over the loss, eh, Hannah?’

‘Perhaps she does not believe she shall lose him,’ observed his wife.

‘What do you mean by that?’

‘Nothing particular, only Jenny may derive comfort from looking forward to the time when she will be of age and able to please herself. It seems unnatural to me that they should give each other up so cheerfully, and it is not Jenny’s disposition either. You seem to forget what a self-willed little mortal she is! And Mr Walcheren is so good-looking too. I am sure Jenny has positively raved to me about his beauty. And where will he find such another girl? I thought she looked more like an angel than a woman at the Bouchers on Wednesday. So pure and sweet and fresh in that white dress, and with those lovely eyes of hers shining like two stars. Don’t you think she has the very loveliest eyes in the world, Hal?’

‘Yes! yes! very pretty, certainly; but handsome is as handsome does, Hannah;

and I should be dreadfully grieved if I thought Jenny could be capable of wilfully deceiving her parents. It would break their hearts. If you fancy she may be (and you women know best about each other as a rule), tell me so, and I will warn the Cramptons. It will be my duty to do so, for they are the oldest friends I possess.'

Mrs Hindes was just about to answer her husband's query, when they were both startled by the appearance of Mr Crampton coming up the drive towards them. There was evidently something unusual about his visit. In the first place, the old man was walking, a most unheard of exertion on his part, and, in the second, he would, in the ordinary course of events, have met his partner in a few minutes in the train, as this was Saturday, when they made a point of going to the City together, in order to pay the workmen's wages, and set things generally right for the ensuing week.

'My dear Crampton! what on earth is

the matter?' cried Henry Hindes, putting down his child, and hastening to his partner.

Mr Crampton's face, which was always of a fine roseate hue, was now positively purple, and, from fast walking and agitation, he found it impossible to articulate. Hannah feared he was going to have a fit, and urged her husband to get him to the house before he attempted to tell them what was amiss. Even when he was placed in a library chair, it was some minutes before he could find breath to speak, and, meanwhile, the distress pictured on his features was unmistakable,

'My dear friend,' said Mr Hindes, with the greatest concern, 'are you ill? Is anything wrong at home? For God's sake, speak, and put us out of this terrible suspense!'

'She's gone, Hindes! she's gone!' gasped Mr Crampton at last.

'Gone? Who? Not Jenny?' cried Mrs Hindes.

The old man nodded his head.

‘Not dead?’ said Hindes, turning as white as a sheet.

‘No! no! Gone off with that scoundrel Walcheren,’ replied Mr Crampton, who had somewhat recovered himself. ‘Didn’t you tell me that he promised to give up all pretensions to her hand, and to leave off visiting her or writing to her?’

‘He did, most emphatically!’ said Hindes. ‘I was just telling my wife about it.’

‘And so did she—so did Jenny,’ continued the father, in a broken voice; ‘and they were both lying to us, sir—both lying! She has left us for him. She writes she is married to him—that it is of no use our attempting any opposition, and we may keep our worthless money for ourselves—and our broken hearts too, I suppose,’ he added, in a lower tone.

‘But it is impossible—there must be some mistake—how did it happen?’ cried Henry Hindes, excitedly.

‘Well, they must have managed to have some communication with each other

since Wednesday, for the girl joined him yesterday. My wife is such a fool—God forgive me for calling her by such a name!—that she never exercised the least supervision over the child, and yesterday morning it seems that Jenny said she was going to her dressmaker's, and they let her set off alone with Brunell. She told him on reaching town—this is the man's story, remember—to put up the horses, and call for her at the Burtons in Cromwell Road, at five o'clock. He was there to his time, and waited outside for an hour, when a caretaker came to the door and asked him what he was waiting for. On his telling her, she said that no young lady had been there that day—that the family was still out of town, and she didn't know when they were likely to be home again. On hearing that, Brunell drove to Madame Costello's, but learned there that Jenny had left directly he drove off in the morning, and had not returned since. A gentleman, her cousin, the woman said, had fetched her away in a cab.

The man came back with this story, and you may imagine the night we have had. My wife was sure it was all right, but I knew the end from the beginning.'

'Don't despair, sir, until you are quite sure,' said Hannah, with ready sympathy.

'I *am* sure, Mrs Hindes. We sat up all night, and the first post this morning brought us that.'

He threw down a scribbled note on the table as he spoke, and Hannah picked it up, for her husband seemed too paralysed at the calamity that had overtaken his friends, to be able to do anything. The note ran thus :—

'DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,—I could not give Frederick up, as you desired me to do, because we love each other too much, so we were married this morning at the Earl's Court Registrar Office, where you can see the entry if you doubt my word. Don't be too angry with me. Remember I am your only child.—Your's affectionately,

'JENNY WALCHEREN.'

‘That’s a nice letter for a man to receive, who has idolised his child for twenty years, isn’t it, Mrs Hindes?’ asked Mr Crampton sarcastically. ‘Remember she is my only child; indeed, I’m not likely to forget it, I can tell Miss Jenny that. And I’ll never see her again, not if I live another fifty years!’

‘Oh, don’t say that. You don’t know what may happen to alter your mind,’ said Hannah, as she took the old man’s hand in hers and pressed it warmly. ‘You love her dearly, and she loves you. Things will not look so black when you are more used to them. After all, Mr Walcheren comes of a good family, and—’

‘And is a Papist,’ interrupted Mr Crampton angrily, ‘a member of the faith which I despise and abhor and condemn—the faith which will bring my wretched daughter down to hell with himself. No, Mrs Hindes, my dear; you mean kindly, but don’t talk to me of ever seeing this matter in a better light.’

‘But she is under age,’ said Henry

Hindes, speaking for the first time. 'How could he marry her without the written consent of her guardians?'

'By a lie, of course. He must have sworn she was of age. It came natural to a Papist, no doubt. They're made of lies, religion and all! It's a proper beginning for a life of deception and ingratitude.'

'But if the licence has been obtained under false pretences, Crampton,' said Mr Hindes eagerly, 'it may not yet be too late to set it aside. It may be possible to force him to return your daughter to you, at all events until she is of age. I don't know the law accurately on this point, but I can go to town at once and inquire, and if there is a chance—if she could be returned to you—'

Mr Hindes' urbanity seemed to have forsaken him at this juncture, for he trembled so violently that his very teeth chattered.

'And do you suppose that I would take her back?' cried Mr Crampton, vehemently. 'What! take the casket

without the jewel! Receive my daughter—no longer only my daughter, but that man's plaything—in her dishonoured home? Never! I will see her dead first! I will stand by thankfully, and watch her coffin lowered into the ground, sooner than acknowledge her again as my child. I have no child now. My Jenny, in whom I took such pride, for whom I have made money and treasured and garnered it up, is gone from me. She is no longer mine. She is Walcheren's wife. I have lost her more effectually than if she had been taken from me by death, as her brothers and sisters were, and never, so help me God! will I see her of my own free will, in this world again.'

He was fuming and raging in his despair, and Hannah Hindes motioned to her husband, to do or say something to calm the old man. But Henry Hindes remained as silent and motionless, as if he had been carved in stone. Then she attempted the task herself.

‘Dear Mr Crampton,’ she whispered, laying her gentle hand on his knotted one, ‘surely you are going too far. This terrible disappointment has come upon you too suddenly, but try to look at it, in a more reasonable light. Jenny has done very, very wrong; no one could think otherwise, but you must not speak of her as if she were abandoned to sin. She is honourably married, remember; and she is so young, that perhaps she did not view the fault of rebelling against your authority from so serious a point of view as we do. Mr Walcheren doubtless persuaded her that it was only a venial error, which you would soon forgive, for I cannot believe that she could ever forget your great love for her, nor hers for you.’

She smoothed the old man’s palm with a motherly touch as she spoke, and her soft voice and manner served in a measure to soothe his extreme agitation.

‘You are a good woman, Mrs Hindes, my dear,’ he replied, more calmly, ‘but my daughter must abide by the step she has taken, however this fellow cajoled her into it. She knew well enough that I would never give my consent to her marriage with a d—d Papist. She gave me her solemn promise, too, to give up all communication with him. She lied to me, Mrs Hindes, as the man lied to your husband, and I renounce them both—I renounce them both! Henceforth, I have no child. Heaven took five from me, and the devil’s got the last.’

And with that Mr Crampton drew forth a red silk handkerchief and buried his face in it.

‘But what is to be done?’ inquired Henry Hindes, ‘what is to be done?’

Hannah glanced round at him in astonishment. His full, deep voice seemed all of a sudden to have become thin and squeaky.

‘Mr Crampton seems to think that we can do nothing, dearest,’ she answered.

‘But some sort of reply must be sent to her letter,’ he continued, ‘or she may present herself at any moment in Hampstead. She is very impetuous, you know, Crampton, and will not easily believe that you can be seriously angry with her. We must prevent a scandal if possible. You had better write to her, or see her once, just to come to an understanding, that you may know what to expect, and she also.’

‘I will never see her, nor write to her again,’ said Mr Crampton.

‘Henry, could *you* not do so?’ asked his wife, pleadingly. ‘If Mr Crampton consents to it, could you not first verify the marriage, and then see poor Jenny, and tell her her father’s decision? Someone ought surely to do it.’

‘Where does she write from?’ asked Mr Hindes.

‘From the Castle Warden Hotel at Dover, whence they will probably cross over to Paris. If you follow them it should be at once. Will you go? Shall I get your portmanteau ready?’

She loved the girl, and cherished a secret hope that, through her husband's intervention, a reconciliation might be effected between the daughter and her parents.

'I am at Mr Crampton's service,' said Mr Hindes.

'What do you expect to issue from the proceeding?' asked the old man, in a muffled voice. 'I will never receive her back at "The Cedars." It is of no use giving her any false hopes, for my decision is irrevocable. She is dead to me from this time forward.'

'Will her mother consent to that, sir?'

'If she does not she must join her daughter, for I will have no one who associates with Papists in my house. I would as soon cherish a brood of vipers. But I do not anticipate my wife being so ungrateful as to desert me in this extremity.'

But if Jenny—if your daughter, on hearing your decision, and learning that it is unalterable, should elect to give up

her husband and return to the protection of her parents—what then, sir?’

‘There is no chance of it,’ said the old man.

‘I am not so sure of that. Our childhood’s affections are generally the strongest. She may be repenting the step she has taken even now. If I see her and find she wishes to come home again — what then?’

‘I do not say that, in such a case, I should absolutely refuse to receive her, but it would be only on the very strictest conditions. And you would let me know first? You would not bring me face to face with her without any preparation, for, by the Lord, Hindes, I would not trust myself to say what I might do in such a case.’

‘No,’ replied Hindes, ‘I promise you I will not act in any way without your consent. But I will go down to Dover, and see if it is possible to have an interview with her alone. If Mr Walcheren is present I have no hopes of success.’

‘Don’t mention the fellow’s name!’ exclaimed Mr Crampton. ‘The very sound of it makes me feel like a murderer. I can conceive at this moment nothing that would give me greater pleasure than to squeeze the last breath out of his vile body.’

He rose to leave then, tottering as if the fatal intelligence had added twenty years to his existence.

‘Don’t walk home. Let me order the carriage. It won’t be ten minutes, and then it can take Henry to the station,’ said Hannah, kindly.

‘Thank you,’ my dear,’ replied Mr Crampton, reseating himself. ‘I do not really think I am equal to the exertion. To think that a rebellious girl has the power to sap a man’s strength in this manner.’

‘The news has been a shock to all of us,’ returned Hannah. ‘My husband looks almost as bad as you do. Henry, you must take something before you start. Ring the bell and tell Simmonds to bring

some brandy and soda. Your face is positively ghastly. What shall I put up for you? Shall you stay the night?’

‘No, I think not; but, perhaps, I may. Just a shirt and a brush and comb, please, nothing more. I am so grieved for the Cramptons,’ said her husband to her, in a lower tone, ‘so deeply, deeply grieved. This will break their hearts. I shouldn’t wonder if it were the death of both of them.’

‘Yes, yes; poor, dear, old people, they loved her so,’ rejoined Hannah, with the tears in her eyes, ‘and we shall feel it terribly, too, Henry, when we have time to realise that it is true.’

‘Oh! that’s all nonsense,’ said her husband, roughly. ‘It is of them we have to think. What can it matter to us? Sooner or later she must have married someone, and *we* have no especial antipathy to Papists. But there is no time to discuss the matter now. Do as I tell you, and let me be off.’

And in another five minutes the two partners in the firm of Hindes & Crampton were driving down the elm-tree road together.

CHAPTER VI.

HONEYMOONS are not always the blissful periods anticipated by those who enter on them, but Frederick's and Jenny's promised to be an exception to the rule. The girl was so lively and merry, so easily pleased with all that surrounded her, and disposed to make so light of any little *désagremens*, that she formed a delightful companion. And then, she was so desperately in love with her husband, and he with her, that they both thought, and perhaps rightly, that they had never known what happiness was till then. Frederick especially, who had frittered away his time and his affections on more girls than he could remember the names of, could not understand how he could

have been such a fool as to waste his life in so frivolous a manner, when so much pleasure had been within his grasp. The day after his marriage, when he was ready to consider himself quite a Benedict of experience, he decided that there was but one source of happiness, worth calling by the name, in this world, and that was the whole and undivided love of a wife, whose heart you felt to be entirely your own.

It was a lovely day, and the two young people were sitting in a room that looked upon the sea, watching the bright waves that were dashing up against the harbour bar, and filling the air with their sweet, salt flavour. Jenny, looking the very quintessence of youth and beauty, attired in a flowing gown of white muslin and lace, with a knot of blue ribbon in her sunny hair, was seated on her husband's knee, playing with his dark locks, and ever and anon pressing her ripe lips upon his forehead.

‘My darling, my darling!’ he said, in

a fervour of admiration,' how happy we are! Did you ever think we should be so exquisitely happy, Jenny?'

'No, Fred, I have never dreamed there could be such bliss in my life before. It is like heaven to be here, all alone with you, and to feel that we shall never, never part again, that we are all in all to one another, and that no one can ever come between us, or separate us. I have only one little regret, Fred, darling, and that is a very little one.'

'What is it, sweetheart?'

'That father and mother are angry with me! If they had been kind about you, I should be the very happiest girl alive. I think *I am* that; now, but if everything were right with the old people, I should be the happiest in heaven or earth.'

'My dear little wife, I don't think you need trouble your sweet self about that, they are sure to come round before long. Why you know they couldn't live without you. Naturally they are angry at

present. We have been very naughty, but we mean to be ever so good for the future, so that they shall be quite proud of us. By the way, Jenny, did you write that letter to your father?’

‘Certainly, and posted it yesterday. Oh! what a time it seems since we were married. I can hardly believe it is only a day. It seems like a year.’

‘That’s very complimentary to me, my darling; but you might have had an answer to your letter by telegram this morning.’

‘So I might, but I daresay dear old papa is awfully enraged with me, and is keeping me in suspense on purpose; but mamma is sure to write in a day or two; I shall be glad to hear from them, Fred. I’d rather know the worst at once.’

‘Why, what do you suppose the worst will be, you little silly? Who can do you any real harm, now that you have me to protect you? Who could wound you through the circle of my arms,’ exclaimed Frederick, as he cast them around

her. 'I defy the world to take my angel from my clasp; and so long as she has me and I have her, we shall be happy!'

The girl was silent for a few moments, whilst her husband was devouring her with kisses, but when he released her, she said thoughtfully,—

'Do you know who I doubt, Fred, though he has been our friend for years, and papa thinks there is no one like him—Mr Hindes! He has always been awfully good to me, and his wife is one of my dearest friends, but still, somehow, he always seems to come between me and anything I like. He is always advising papa about me, as if I belonged to him as well. He made him exchange my dog-cart for a Ralli, because he declared it was too dangerous for me to drive about in, and he makes mamma take me home from parties before twelve o'clock, for fear I should be overtired. I suppose he means it kindly, but I think it is very officious of him, and I have told him so. And now, I fancy, he will be advising my parents not to give

in and forgive me too soon—perhaps tell them not to forgive me at all,’ added Jenny, with drooping head.

‘Officious, indeed! I should call it d—d impertinence on his part,’ acquiesced her husband, ‘and he wouldn’t try that game on twice with me! To tell you the truth, little woman, I don’t like your Mr Hindes any more than you do; he interfered in my affairs sufficiently by informing me I was to make myself scarce, but I expect by this time that he has found out his mistake. There is certainly something curious about the fellow. One cannot find fault with his manner, which is most courteous, and he seems well-informed into the bargain, and yet he has a knack of saying the most unpleasant things in a pleasant way that I ever came across. However, he will never worry you again, my Jenny, nor cross your path, if you don’t wish him to do so.’

‘Oh! I have no wish to cut him, only I fancy he will influence papa to hold out against us as long as possible. For

the funny part about him is, that although he has always been so kind to me, personally, whenever he advises papa on my account, it is always something to give me annoyance instead of pleasure. I really quite hated him at one time, for so constantly opposing my wishes. I was always doing something unladylike, or dangerous, or foolish, according to Mr Hindes' account.'

'Well, that's over, at all events,' replied Frederick, 'neither Mr Hindes, nor Mr Anybody else, shall ever interfere with my wife's pursuits. If I think she is endangering her precious safety, I shall kiss her till she promises me to leave it off and be a good girl, but nothing else shall come between us.'

'I shall go on being bad, so that you may go on kissing me,' said Jenny, as she nestled closer to him.

'But what are we going to decide about to-morrow, little wife?' asked the young man, after an eloquent pause. 'Is it to be Paris or not?'

‘Do the boats run to-morrow?’ asked Jenny, dubiously.

‘I fancy so, but that is soon ascertained. They are sure to know all about it in the hotel. The question is, do you prefer to cross to-morrow or Monday?’

‘We are very happy here,’ said the girl, thoughtfully.

‘Happy! my sweet! happy is not the word for it. We are in Paradise, at least I know I am. But what made you make that remark?’

‘Because, if it is all the same to you, Fred, I would rather stay here till Monday; then, if my father writes to me, or wishes to see me, I shall have time to receive his letter or to receive him before we leave England.’

‘Very well, dear, have your own way in everything. You will never find me oppose your wishes. I am not so sanguine as you are about the old people coming round so quickly—I fancy your dear papa has a will of his own—still, it will be as well, perhaps, to stay a day

or two in England, to give them a chance of behaving like Christians. But what do you feel like now doing now, eh?’

‘Kissing you,’ replied Jenny, suiting the action to the word.

‘But we’ve been at that game for twenty-four mortal hours, my darling,’ he cried, laughing, ‘and before long there will be nothing of us left. Will you come for a walk?’

‘Dearest, I’m too tired.’

‘Well, if your ladyship will give me a little leave of absence, I will go for a swim. It is just the day for it. I sha’n’t be long. Back for luncheon, at all events.’

‘Oh! love, be careful,’ exclaimed Jenny, with startled eyes; ‘don’t do anything rash. Think how precious you are to me!’

‘You dear goose,’ replied her husband, ‘why, swimming is one of the things I do best. However, I will be careful, I promise you, now, and always, that I have such a dear wife to care if I live or die.’

‘I suppose you will not want luncheon

till three,' said Jenny, for the remains of breakfast was still on the table.

'No, three will do nicely, and then we will have a carriage and go for a jolly drive over the cliffs.'

'I wish I had my dear cobs here, and could drive you myself,' said Jenny, with a slight sigh. 'I wonder if father will let me have my cobs. They are my very own, for he gave them to me on my birthday.'

'If he doesn't, your husband will give you a pair that you will like just as well.'

He came back as he spoke and embraced her fondly.

'Don't regret anything you may have left behind you, my sweet,' he murmured, 'remember, you cannot have them and me as well.'

'I regret nothing and nobody,' she answered, clinging to him, 'you are my world, dearest.. In having you I have everything.'

The young man's face glowed with delight, as he tore himself away from his

enchantress, and left the hotel to have his swim.

For a little time after he had quitted her, Jenny tried to interest herself with the newspapers and magazines which they had purchased the day before. But she was naturally restless, and could not chain her thoughts to anything. She read one or two short stories without knowing what they were about, for her mind would keep wandering back to Hampstead and all that was happening there. Every time a footfall sounded near her room, she fancied it was the waiter bringing a telegram from her father, or a message, perhaps, that he waited below to speak to her. At last her nervous dread, lest he should arrive and interview her without the protection of her husband, grew to such a height that she felt as if she could not remain in the hotel without Frederick, and put on her walking attire with the idea of going to the beach and waiting for him there. But Dover was a strange place to Jenny, and she

had no idea which direction Frederick might have taken, nor where the gentlemen bathed, nor if it would be proper for her to go there if she did. Besides, did she not remember her husband saying something about bathing from a boat, in which case he might be miles away from the land. The green downs stretched out invitingly before her ; looking so much cooler and less glaring than the sandy beach sprinkled over with nursemaids and children, so she turned her steps in that direction. She carried a magazine in her hand, and she would go and sit on the cliffs she thought, till three o'clock had struck and Frederick had returned home again. A little chill feeling ran over Jenny, as she took her seat on the sward close to the edge of the cliffs whence she could see and hear the sparkling waves as they dashed over the shingly beach, and she moved further inland with a shudder.

‘What an awful thing it would be,’ she inwardly said, ‘if I were to fall

over those cliffs now—*now*, in the very hey-day of my youth and happiness. To leave my Frederick just as I know what it is to love him; just as I have taken the bold step to unite myself with him forever! Yet others have done it; others, I suppose, with hopes as high as mine, and with feelings as strong. Oh, it must have been terrible! terrible! The very idea makes my flesh creep! I must be over-excited and nervous to-day to think of such a silly thing!’ and she drew herself further and further away from the edge of the cliff and tried to interest herself in her book.

It was about this time that Henry Hindes, pale and anxious as to the issue of his errand, walked into the vestibule of the Castle Warden Hotel and asked if Mrs Walcheren were at home. The porter having referred to half-a-dozen waiters in turn, at first said ‘yes,’ but on Mr Hindes sending up his name for admittance, the man returned to say he

had been mistaken, and neither Mr nor Mrs Walcheren were indoors.

‘Is it only an excuse, or is the lady really not in?’ demanded Mr Hindes.

‘She is really not at home, sir,’ was the reply, ‘but I did not see her go out; I suppose she went through the garden. Mr Walcheren went out better than an hour ago, for I saw him pass through the hall myself.’

‘Do you know when they are likely to be in?’ next asked the visitor.

‘I can’t say for certain, sir, but their lunch is ordered for three o’clock.’

‘Very well; I will return at three.’

‘What name shall I say, sir?’

‘You need say no name. I will send it up on my return,’ said Henry Hindes as he walked away.

He was disappointed that he had not found Jenny at home and alone, yet it was hardly natural that a young husband and wife should separate on the very morning after their wedding-day. But we are all apt to be unreasonable when

our wishes are thwarted. However, he made up his mind to call again at three o'clock. Whether alone or together, he could not return to Hampstead without seeing Jenny, and delivering to her the message with which her father had entrusted him. So he must wile away the intervening hours as best he could. He stopped at the bar to have a brandy-and-soda, not the first by several, that he had taken that morning to build up his courage for the coming interview, and sustain him under the shock which the news of her marriage had been to him. And then he wandered forth into the town and took his way idly up the very path to the cliffs that Jenny had trodden before him. He had not walked, slowly and clumsily, for more than half an hour when he came upon her, seated on the close-cropped herbage, with her eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the water, and her book lying unheeded in her lap. Henry Hindes' heart gave a great leap and throb as he recognised the lovely features, shaded by a

broad chip hat, trimmed with field flowers, and the graceful figure of the beauty of Hampstead. Here was an opportunity, for which he had never hoped—to find her thus alone and unoccupied, amidst the glories of Nature, with her attention free to listen to his pleadings on her parents' behalf. His involuntary exclamation as he encountered her, caused Jenny to look round, and the hot blush of shame that flooded her face at seeing him proved that she was not dead to the knowledge that she had done something to blush for.

‘Mr Hindes!’ she said, with a little gasp as if of fear, ‘what has induced you to follow me?’

‘Nothing but the heartiest interest in your welfare, Jenny, you may be sure of that! Did you think that we could hear the news of your marriage at Hampstead without emotion? It paralysed us, Jenny! We could not believe it without further proof—without your assurance that it was undertaken of your own free will.’

‘My father is the proper person to put such questions to me,’ replied Jenny, proudly. ‘If he wished them answered, why did he not come to Dover himself, instead of sending you?’

‘Your father could not come if he wished it. Your letter has made him so ill that he is not fit to leave home. I dread what the effects of the shock may be on him. Remember, he is no longer a young man, sixty-two on his last birthday, and you have robbed him of all he had in life.’

‘I don’t see that,’ replied Jenny, with her old pertness, ‘I must have married some day; I don’t suppose my father meant to keep me single all my life, and in such a matter, people are generally left to choose for themselves.’

‘Not when their choice is in direct opposition to their parents’ wishes! However, you have elected to fly in their faces, and what’s done can’t be undone. I visited the Earl’s Court Registrar’s Office this morning, and

found the ill news was, indeed, too true, It, therefore, now only remains to be seen what remedy there is for so sad a state of affairs, and if you are prepared to hear the proposal your father has sent you by me.'

He had made as though he were about to throw himself on the grass beside her, and, in order to avoid his doing so, Jenny rose and moved a few paces forward. Henry Hindes had, therefore, no alternative but to walk slowly by her side, and as she had turned her face from the town, each step took them further from it.

'If you have anything unpleasant to tell me,' she said, with a slight laugh, 'for goodness' sake don't make it public property. Let us go further up the cliffs, where our voices will not reach any loiterers on the beach below.

'You can hardly expect my message to be a very pleasant one, Jenny,' commenced Henry Hindes, as com-

posedly as he knew how, 'but it is soon told. Mr Crampton refuses either to write to or see you, unless you agree to his conditions. When he received your terrible news this morning, I was afraid he would have a fit, it affected him so dreadfully. As for your poor mother and aunt, they are, I hear, in utter despair. You have changed a happy home, Jenny, into a house of mourning.'

'Well, they should have been more considerate of my feelings,' said the girl, in a low voice, but Mr Hindes could detect signs of softening in it.

'They were considerate of them, they intended to be considerate of them,' exclaimed Henry Hindes, 'they only told you the truth when they said that Walcheren was not a fit man for you to marry, that he was a gambler and an evil liver—that—'

'Mr Hindes, you forget yourself,' cried the girl with newly acquired dignity, 'when you said those things

the other day, you were speaking of an acquaintance, to-day you are maligning *my husband!*'

'I cannot help it! Were he twenty times your husband, I must say what is in my mind concerning him. You have had your own way too long, Jenny, and now you have taken it to your ruin. But your father is willing to receive you back as his daughter, on one condition, and that is, that you leave this man who has led you into so grievous an error, and return to the protection of your parents.'

Jenny gazed at him as if he had been a lunatic.

'Do I hear you rightly,' she said, 'or are you mad? Leave my husband, whom I have just married, leave the man whom I love above all the world, father and mother included, leave him all alone and go back to Hampstead to live a widowed life with my people! Why, papa must have been tipsy to propose such a thing. What had you

been giving the old gentleman to make him talk such nonsense? Surely you are dreaming and have fancied it all.

‘Dreaming!’ echoed Hindes, indignantly; ‘is it dreaming to see your father’s agony, to hear of your mother’s tears? No, these things may be play to you, Jenny, but they are death to them. I have repeated your father’s words just as he told them to me. “I will never see her, nor speak, nor write to her so long as life lasts,” he said, “and I will never, under any circumstances, receive that man into my house; but, if Jenny will give him up and come back to our protection, I will try and forgive the past.” Jenny! think of what you are resigning before you finally decide. Mr Crampton is much richer than you imagine. You will inherit nothing short of fifteen to twenty thousand a year at his death. And you were married illegally. Mr Walcheren took a false oath about your age, and this may be set aside if you will only give your

consent to it. Why, Jenny, you have not been half clever enough ! With your beauty and prospective wealth, you should have married into the aristocracy. Think twice about it. Give up this man who is not worthy of you, and you will make twice as brilliant a marriage by-and-by.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE girl turned round upon him like a fury.

‘How dare you,’ she cried, ‘make such an infamous proposal to me? I don’t believe papa ever told you to say so. I don’t believe he would have thought of such a thing if you had not put it into his head. You are not telling me the truth, Mr Hindes. What spite have you against me, that you are always trying to put a spoke in my wheel in this way. You never propose anything for my pleasure, it is always something for my pain. I believe you have taken a hatred to me, you go against me so persistently.’

‘*I—I* hate you, Jenny!’ stammered Hindes.

‘Yes, I feel sure you do, else why should you be forever urging papa to do something to displease me. I have seen it for years past. Every obstacle that has been thrown in my way has been by your advice. What am I to you? Why can’t you let me and my affairs alone?’

‘Why can’t I let you alone? Why am I for ever interesting myself in your affairs?’ he repeated after her. ‘Cannot you guess, Jenny; has no glimmer of the truth reached your heart during all these years? Well, then, I will tell you; it is because I love you.’

‘A nice way of loving,’ interposed the girl sarcastically.

‘Yes! you may laugh, but it will not unmake the fact. I love you, Jenny, as no one of your admirers has ever loved you yet, love you with the fire and fervour of a disappointed man, of one who knows, and has known for years past, that his love is of no avail, that it lives without hope, but still lives, burning on—loving on—because it can never die even if it would,

because it would not die even if it could. Oh! my darling! I have loved you for years. Just give me one look of pity at last.'

But Jenny recoiled from him with a shudder of disgust.

'How dare you! how *dare* you!' she panted; 'and you pretend to be my friend, you, a married man. Oh! you have made me feel that I have sunk low indeed.'

Her look of horror and her tone of contempt stung Hindes more than a dozen lashes from her hand would have done.

'Married!' he exclaimed; 'what has that to do with a man's feelings? Am I blind, deaf, insensible, because I am married. And what about your fine scoundrel over there? You imagine he loves you. Yet, what is he? A married man, and worse than a married man, a thousand times over, for he has left a poor girl who is, to all intents and purposes, his wife, and a child who has the right to call him father, to break their hearts, and perhaps to starve down at Luton, whilst he is philandering

after you. Ah ! that has touched you, has it ?' he continued almost savagely, as he saw Jenny's cheeks flush. ' Well ! it is the solemn truth, as I can prove to you. And she is not the only one either. Ask Philip Walcheren ! You are one of many, Jenny, though you may wear the wedding-ring upon your finger.'

' You lie !' cried the girl vehemently ; ' I am sure you lie, and I will tell my husband every word you say, and he shall punish you for them. You want to frighten me, that is all—you are jealous of my great happiness. I have always suspected you were double-faced, and now I know it. And I hate you—I hate you. And I love my husband as much as I hate you, and nothing shall ever separate us, try as hard as you may. We will be together and together and together, until death.'

She turned, in all her beauty with a mocking smile upon her lovely face, towards him as she spoke, and stepped backwards towards the edge of the cliff. Henry Hindes' first impulse was to catch her by

the wrist to prevent her falling over. But she wrenched it from his grasp.

‘Don’t dare to touch me, you brute!’ she cried excitedly. ‘You want to push me over the cliff now, I suppose!’

God! why did she say the word? Why did she put the idea into his excited brain? It had never entered his head before. He had never thought of her but in kindness. For years past, he had secretly cherished her image, suffering himself to indulge in beatific day-dreams of what his life might have been had Jenny been destined to spend it by his side—had permitted himself to enjoy her presence, to bask in her beauty, to be miserable when the thought crossed his mind that some day he would be assuredly called upon to relinquish her to another man, but never had he done less than love her. But now, as he held her in his power, and she laughed derisively into his face, whilst those words, ‘I hate you,’ still rung on the air, something entered into Henry Hindes that had never been there before. A wild fury that she should

spurn him, her friend of years, and love Frederick Walcheren—a mad despair that he would never possess her beauty, and that another had the legal right to gloat over it night and day for all time—whilst he stood apart, baffled and disappointed, and then a desperate resolve to save her from further contamination and himself from a life-longing, and the devil, which is in all of us, glared out of his eyes, as with a single effort, hardly calculating what the effects would be, acting more on the impulse of what he *would do*, than of what he *was doing*, he pushed the girl violently from him and sent her light body hurling over the stupendous abyss which separated them from the beach below.

It was done in a second, beyond power of recall. This moment Jenny was standing before him in her mocking loveliness—and the next there was only a void, and not even the impress of her footprints on the short herbage where she had stood.

Henry Hindes remained motionless for

the space of half a minute, then sunk down into a sitting position, and trembled as if he were taken with an ague. He did not look over the cliff to see what had become of his victim. He knew but too well! He had glanced over it before he met her, and saw that it consisted of an unbroken line of chalk cliffs, leading precipitately to the shingly shore. He knew what he should see if he looked over, and he dared not look! He only sat there and shook like an aspen leaf. The clammy perspiration rose upon his face, and stood in great beads upon his brow, but he did not raise his hand to wipe it away. He only remained dumb and motionless and trembled. By-and-by some instinct warned him that he ought to move, to go back to the town, and that it would not do for him to be found sitting so close by. Upon this he tried to stand, but found he could not, so turned round and crawled away, for some distance, on his hands and knees. A fresh breeze had sprung up from the sea, and it revived

him sufficiently to enable him to stand upon his feet, and to commence with a tottering step to find his way back again. As he did so, he hardly believed that what had happened was real. He must have drunk more than was good for him, he thought, and it was a bad dream that had overtaken him. But a backward glance made the horrid truth too plain. There was the barren cliff, deserted for the time being, whilst all the world of Dover was occupied on the beach, with bathing or flirting or play. There was the very spot where they had stood together on the close grass, besprinkled with pink thrift and stunted daisies—the same irregular edge where she had mocked him, whence he would have saved her if she had let him, but where—

‘I must pull myself together!’ thought Henry Hindes, with a violent shudder; ‘this is not the time or place for me to think about it! It was an awful accident, but nothing more—I would not have injured her for all the world, but it is an

awkward time for it to have occurred, and in my presence, too—and I must take measures not to have my name implicated in the affair!’

He looked around with dimmed eyes as he argued with himself, but, far or near, he could perceive no one and no thing, except a few sheep grazing on the stunted herbage. Then he ventured near the cliff—not with his eyes towards that point where she had fallen, but turned the other way, and he saw it was quite deserted, the bathing population being at the further end of the town. Not a soul was on the beach, only a few boats were drawn up high and dry, whilst several more were dancing on the blue waters, laden with fishing nets or pleasure-seekers. The complete seclusion of the place imparted a temporary confidence to him.

‘For the children’s sake,’ he muttered to himself, as he took his way downwards; ‘for Walter’s sake, and the others and Hannah, I must be brave and calm and not betray myself. Let me see! what

time is it? Three o'clock! and I said I would return to the hotel about three. Well! I mustn't hurry, it will look bad! I will go into a restaurant first and have my dinner!'

The thought of eating sickened him, but he persevered, and, entering the principal restaurant in the town, ordered an expensive meal. But when it was served he could not eat it. The food would have choked him. Something seemed to have closed in his throat and prevented his swallowing.

Presently an idea struck him. Calling the waiter, he said,—

'I have some business to talk over with a friend in this town, and, as my time is short, I think it will facilitate matters if we dine together. Lay another plate and tell them to keep the dinner back till I return. I am going round to the hotel to fetch my friend. Keep the champagne in ice. I shall not be absent more than a few minutes.'

He left the restaurant as he spoke, and

re-entered the vestibule of the Castle Warden Hotel.

‘Has Mrs Walcheren returned yet?’ he inquired, in an unconcerned voice.

‘No, sir; she has not. Mr Walcheren, he came home about half-an-hour ago, but he went out again. I really can’t say when they’ll be back, sir!’

Hindes took out his card and wrote on it in a very shaky hand:—

‘I have called twice to-day to see you, with a message from home, and hoped to have persuaded you to lunch with me at the Tivoli Restaurant; but my time is up, and I must return to town. Will write in a day or two. H. H.’

‘Give this to Mrs Walcheren on her return, please,’ he said to the waiter, and took his way, as best he could, back to the Tivoli.

There he forced himself to eat a little and drink a good deal, and, calling for the bill, gave the waiter a liberal

tip, and departed in a cab to the station.

He had done all he could. He should tell the Cramptons, he had called twice to interview Mrs Walcheren and been unsuccessful each time, and he had waited about Dover till four o'clock. It was Saturday, and he could not spend Sunday away from his wife and children. They would surely say that he had done all that was necessary, and more than they had required from him. He had tried to see her twice, and he had failed ; they must wait now until Jenny wrote to them herself.

' Until Jenny wrote to them herself !'
As the thought crossed his mind, Henry Hindes sunk back into the corner of the railway carriage, in the same comatose state in which he had been on the downs. The train flew screeching through the evening air, on its way to London, but time and place were alike unheeded by him.

Had it been a dream—an unholy, lurid nightmare—or was it reality ?

When he reached 'The Old Hall,' it was nine o'clock. He told his wife he had stayed to dine in town, but, in truth, he had been wandering about the streets, hardly conscious of what he was doing, until the time warned him that each hour he delayed would make it more difficult to account for his prolonged absence. So he dragged himself home, and the effort he made to look like a man who was rather disgusted for having been foolish enough to take a lot of trouble for nothing, sat upon him much as a clown's paint would sit upon a corpse. Hannah was naturally all sympathy for his disappointment and failure, and Hindes was compelled to take refuge in gruffness, to elude her searching inquiries.

'My dearest, how ill you look, and how tired you seem. This has been a trying day for you, I am sure. So fond as you are of dear Jenny, too. And did you really not see her?'

'I have told you already half-a-dozen

times, Hannah, that I called twice at the Castle Warden Hotel to see her, but she was out each time, so was he, so there was nothing to be done but to return home. I did not relish the idea of wasting a Sunday in hanging about Dover, perhaps with the same result, when I might be at home with you and the chicks.'

'Dear Henry,' said his wife, 'you are always so considerate of us. Still, for Jenny's sake—if it were to lead to a reconciliation between her and her parents, I would give you up for even a longer time than that. You might have written her a letter, Henry, though.'

'I *did* write, just a scribble on my card, to say I had hoped to get her to lunch with me at the Tivoli Restaurant, when we could have talked the unhappy matter over together; indeed, I had ordered lunch for two, but she was not in and they couldn't say when she would be in, so I was obliged reluctantly to come back without seeing

her. But I don't suppose it would have been of any use. What girl would give up her lover the day after her wedding? It was a mad scheme, and quixotic in me to set out on such an errand.'

'No; don't say that dear, for I am sure the old people will be glad hereafter, to think that you did all you could to bring them together.'

Henry Hindes started.

"Hereafter?" he echoed; 'what do you mean by "hereafter?"'

'Nothing, my dearest, only you surely do not think the Cramptons will hold out for ever, do you? And, when they are reconciled to Jenny and we are all happy again, I am sure they will be pleased to remember (and so will she), that *you* were the first to try and bring them together.'

'Oh, yes, yes! I see!' replied her husband, as he passed his handkerchief over his brow.

'Poor Mrs Crampton and Miss Bostock were over here this afternoon,' con-

tinued Mrs Hindes. ‘They said they should go mad if they had no one to talk to about it. I don’t think they are half so angry with Jenny as her father is. Of course, they say she has been very naughty, and her papa is quite right not to forgive her in a hurry, but they evidently think in the long run, he will find he cannot live without her. “It would be ridiculous,” Mrs Crampton said, “and most wicked if they cast off their only child, however wrong she might be.” She is afraid it will be a long time before Mr Crampton forgives Mr Walcheren or consents to receive him at “The Cedars,” because of his being a Papist, but as for their darling, she declared if papa did not ask her up next week, she should go down to Dover to see her herself. I believe there is a great deal more in the old lady than we have given her credit for, Henry, and that she will have her own way in this matter, whatever her husband may say. But you are not feeling

well, dear, surely? I never remember to have seen you look so white before. Are you sure that you made a good dinner in town? Or will you have a brandy-and-soda? You must have something, your looks quite frighten me.'

Mr Hindes pulled himself together and sat straight up on the sofa.

'Don't be a fool,' he begun, but, seeing the consternation which his rudeness evoked, he added, 'don't worry me, Hannah. This has been a very fatiguing day, and, I may say, a very distressing one into the bargain. I cannot look on this matter in the same bright light as you do. Mrs Crampton may be very brave and determined, but she has her match in her husband, and I never knew him to go from his word yet. And the girl inherits her determination from him. I do not believe she was from home when I called to-day. I believe I was denied on purpose. They anticipated my errand, naturally, and declined to have a scene, which there

undoubtedly would have been if Mr Walcheren and I had been brought in contact. I believe the young man to be a regular scoundrel, and I should have told him so. After which, I suppose, I should never have spoken to either of them again.'

'Oh, I don't believe Jenny would really quarrel with you, whatever you said, Henry. She is too fond of you for that. She is an impetuous little creature and says a great deal more than she means, but she has often told me how highly she thinks of your friendship, and how she felt sure that, whatever happened, *you* would always stick by her and help her out of all her scrapes.'

'There, there, hold your tongue, that will do!' exclaimed her husband, as he rose and walked slowly towards the door. 'I want to see my boy before I sleep to-night,' and he took his way, closely followed by his wife, to the nursery.

The two little girls were very pretty creatures, who combined the best points in both father and mother, but the boy, by one of these freaks of Nature which have been mentioned before, was like neither of them, but rejoiced in a particularly ugly mug of his own invention. He lay asleep in a magnificent cot which his father had had carved for him on the occasion of his birth, covered with a finely embroidered quilt; his black eyes were closed, but his little snub nose, swarthy complexion, and wide mouth, formed a sorry contrast to the lace and linen which enveloped them. No prince of the realm could have been more luxuriously surrounded than was Master Walter Hindes. His sisters were lying in their beds close by, their fair hair straying over their pillows, but their father hardly glanced at them as he crossed the room and bent over the carved cot at the further end. As he gazed at his sleeping son and heir, all the stolid feelings of despair which had occupied his mind during the day seemed

to fade away and leave a wealth of passionate love behind them. He stooped down closely and laid his face against that of the slumbering child.

‘My son, my son,’ he murmured, but as the words left his lips, though heard by no one but himself, a vision of Jenny’s face rose before him—of Jenny’s mocking face, as she stood on the edge of the precipice and defied him—and, with a sudden impulse, he drew forth his silk handkerchief and wiped his kiss off his child’s brow.

‘What is that for, my dear?’ asked Mrs Hindes, with a low laugh.

‘A fly—a gnat—’ he stammered, ‘it might disturb Wally in his sleep,’ and he withdrew, at the same moment, from the child’s bed.

‘Won’t you look at Elsie and Laurie?’ whispered the mother, as she passed her arm through his, and pulled him gently towards the girls’ bed. ‘They have been such good maids all day; I took them with me for a drive to call on old Miss Buckstone this afternoon, and she was

delighted with them ; she wants us to let them go and spend a whole day with her.'

'And not Wally?' said Henry Hindes, quickly.

'Well, she did not ask Master Wally, and she would regret it, I fancy, if she did. He is rather a handful away from home, dearest, you know, and too much used to have his own way ; we really must not spoil him so much, or he may come to the same sad end as poor Jenny.'

'What sad end? What do you mean by saying that?' demanded Henry Hindes, for the second time that evening.

'Why, marry without our consent, to be sure, Henry ; what else could I mean? Though I hope her marriage may have a happy ending after all. I shall always believe in it and pray for it, until it comes to pass.'

'Yes, yes, pray for it, Hannah,' replied her husband. 'I don't believe much in prayer myself, but if anybody should ever be heard, it is you! You have been a

good wife to me, my dear, I seem to see it more plainly to-night than I have ever done before.'

'Ah! that's because of this trouble about poor Jenny; it has regularly upset us all. Shall you go over and see the Cramptons to-night, Harry?'

'No, no, I couldn't. I have had enough bother already,' replied Hindes, shrinking from the idea.

'Of course, and perhaps they will not expect it; but you must write to them, for they will be anxiously expecting to hear some news of your journey.'

'So they will,' he answered, as if the idea had only just struck him; 'well, I will not write, I will go,' and he rose to get his hat and stick, then suddenly turning to Hannah, he added,—'it's a fine night, will you go with me?'

She looked surprised at the request, but answered readily,—

'With pleasure, dear, if you will wait whilst I put on my hat and mantle.'

The brief walk to 'The Cedars' was

accomplished in silence, but, as they reached the house, Hindes said to his wife,—

‘Don’t repeat anything I told you; leave me to tell my own story, I want to save them as much pain as possible.’

They found the three old people sitting together and looking very forlorn. Mr Crampton had recovered his temper of the morning, and was seated in an arm-chair, huddled up behind his newspaper, and professed to take no interest in the conversation that ensued. The two women flew at Henry Hindes as soon as he appeared.

‘Oh, dear Mr Hindes! did you see her? What news do you bring us? Do not keep us in suspense; we implore you! Is she well? What did she say?’

‘My dear friends,’ he answered, with assumed jocularitv; ‘one at a time, if you please, and you must prepare yourselves for a disappointment. I haven’t seen her at all! I called twice at the

hotel and they were out each time. What else could we expect? I'm afraid I went down on a wild goose chase. Such a lovely day! Where should a bride and bridegroom be but out of doors! I am afraid we must have patience till next week. Then, if Mr Crampton wishes it, I will go down again and make a second attempt to interview them.'

'Oh, dear, dear; I *am* disappointed,' sighed Mrs Crampton; 'for I feel sure, if you had seen darling Jenny, that all would have been right!'

'Don't talk nonsense,' interposed her husband. 'How can anything be right again since she has elected to marry that scoundrel? The jade has made her own bed, and she may lie on it, and I hope it'll be a deuced hard one, too!'

'Don't say that,' replied Henry Hindes, quickly; 'if it should be hard it is not *you* that will make it so! I scribbled a line to her on my card to say I had

brought her a message from home, so, if I am not very much mistaken, you will receive another letter from her before long.'

'Dear Mr Hindes, how can we ever thank you enough for the trouble you have taken on our behalf,' said Mrs Crampton, as she slid her slender hand in his; 'you are the truest and best friend we have. God bless you!'

But he could not stand the gentle pressure of her hand, nor the grateful intonation of her voice.

'Don't speak about it, please!' he answered, pulling his hand out of her's almost roughly; 'I wish—I wish I could have done more, but—but— Come! Hannah!' he exclaimed, interrupting himself; 'we must go home! It is late, and my two journeys have tired me. Good-night, Mrs Crampton! Good-night to everybody! we must leave the further discussion of the matter to another time,' and, with a hasty nod all round, he left the room.

He did appear very tired when they reached their home, very exhausted and overdone, but his condition did not tend to give him a good night's rest. On the contrary, long after Hannah had sunk into the dreamless sleep which waits on a good conscience joined to a good digestion, her unhappy husband lay wide awake staring into the darkness, and starting at every shadow that lurked in the corners of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONGST Frederick Walcheren's varied accomplishments, swimming held a prominent position. From a child he had exercised this most useful of all practices, until he was as much at home in the water as on land. And on that fatal Saturday there was every inducement for him to spend a long time in his favourite occupation. The day was transcendently beautiful; the sea was sparkling with electricity[?] and warm as a tepid bath; and the beach was crowded with spectators, eager to watch and applaud the various feats of natation which he performed. He was in good temper with himself and the world, poor fellow! and anxious to give them all the pleasure in

his power. So he remained in the warm, exhilarating water as long as possible, performing all sorts of extraordinary dives and plunges and strange modes of swimming, whilst the people on the shore were full of admiration for his skill. At last he felt he had had about enough of it for the present, and dressed to return to the hotel. As he descended the steps of his machine, a young man of ordinary appearance, who was apparently waiting for him, came forward.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ he began, ‘but, from witnessing your feats of skill in the water, I presume you are a swimming master, and should like to know your terms for a course of lessons.’

Frederick laughed heartily at the idea, but he was not snob enough to be offended by the young man’s mistake.

‘Indeed, I wish I were anything half so useful,’ he replied; ‘but I am only an amateur like yourself. Swimming is not at all difficult; it only requires pluck and practice. Anyone could attain my

proficiency if he cared to take the trouble.'

'You'll forgive me for mentioning it, sir?' said the stranger, who feared he might have offended him.

'With all my heart. There was no harm in asking,' replied Frederick, as he heard the town clock strike three, and hastened towards the hotel. He reached it, almost running, and, going breathlessly upstairs, threw open the door of their sitting-room. But Jenny was not there. A waiter was employed putting the last touches to the luncheon-table, which was evidently only waiting their return to be spread with the noonday meal.

'Where is Mrs Walcheren?' inquired Frederick.

'I don't know, sir,' replied the stolid waiter, as he continued putting out cruets and water bottles.

Frederick ran up to their bedroom, which was on an upper floor, and finding that also empty, put on his straw hat again and descended to the vestibule.

‘Has my wife—Mrs Walcheren, gone out?’ he asked of the porter.

‘Well, sir, I really can’t say. There’s been a gentleman asking that question here already, but I couldn’t give him no satisfaction. I suppose the lady must be out, because we can’t find her nowhere, but none of us see her pass through the hall, and I’ll take my oath she hasn’t come in, for I’ve never left my post one minute. Perhaps she went to the beach to you, sir.’

‘Oh, doubtless, but about the gentleman who called to see her, what was his name?’

‘He didn’t leave no name, sir, but said he would call again.’

‘What was he like? Short and stout and middle-aged, with rather a red complexion, eh?’

He concluded at once that it must have been Mr Crampton, who had followed his daughter on the receipt of her letter that morning.

‘Well, not very red in the face, sir,

but stoutish certainly, and not over tall.'

'I know him,' replied Frederick, thinking he did. 'If he comes again during my absence, ask him to walk upstairs and wait until we return.'

'All right, sir.'

Of course it was Mr Crampton, he thought. It could be no one else, and he must be by Jenny's side when their encounter took place. If old Crampton thought that, by right of his paternity, he would bully Jenny, he was very much mistaken. He would have to answer to her husband first. He went back to the beach, thinking he should find her amongst all the nursemaids, children, serenaders and fruit-sellers, and was prepared to meet her with a little scolding for exposing herself to the heat of the day and the vulgarities of the Dover sands. But she was not there. The beach was almost deserted now, for the babies and their attendants had gone back to their lodgings to early dinner, and the serenaders were per-

forming in front of the 'pubs,' in hopes of earning a meal. There would have been no difficulty in discerning Jenny's distinguished little figure on the long line of sand and shingle, but it was evident she was not there. Where could the minx have hidden herself? Frederick was a little inclined to feel cross, although it *was* the first day of their married life, because Jenny had so decidedly said she would rather not go out that morning, and, if she had not done so, he should not have left her to herself. Could she have ventured into the town? She had come away so hurriedly, that she might have found herself in want of some trifling article that she had forgotten and gone to the shops to procure it. He turned his steps, therefore, in that direction, but saw her nowhere in the streets. He even asked one or two pedestrians if they had met a young lady in a broad-brimmed hat trimmed with poppies and grasses, but they all shook their heads. Frederick

wandered about the streets for some time, and then resolved to go back to the hotel. After all, Jenny was not a baby. She had been well used to look after herself, and had a watch to tell her the proper time to return. It was more than likely she was already at the Castle Warden. His first inquiry on re-entering was naturally for her.

‘No, sir, the lady ain’t been in yet,’ was the disappointing reply, ‘but the gentleman as I spoke of, he came again and left his card.’

‘Where is it?’ said Frederick, eagerly, and was handed the one which Henry Hindes had left behind him.

‘Did you ask him to wait and see us?’ he inquired.

‘Well, sir, to tell you the truth, I had gone for my dinner and didn’t see the gentleman this time, but William tells me he seemed in a great hurry like, and didn’t ask to wait, but said he had no time to come again to-day, as he had to catch a train for London.’

‘Oh, very well, it is of no consequence,’ replied Frederick Walcheren rather testily. ‘Tell them not to serve luncheon until Mrs Walcheren returns. She cannot be many minutes now.’

But it was many many minutes before she came back to the hotel. Frederick went upstairs to their sitting-room, and tried to occupy his mind with newspapers, and persuade himself that he was not particularly anxious for his wife’s return. But there is nothing more irritating than to be kept in suspense, especially for a trifle. He could not help wondering where Jenny had gone to, and why she had gone, and why the dickens she hadn’t come back again! If the stranger who had inquired for her had not left a proof that he was Mr Henry Hindes instead of Mr Crampton, he should have almost fancied that she had been silly enough to have been lured away again by her father. But that was folly! Jenny was his wife; by love and by law. No one could ever take her from him again

unless that quibble about her age would be considered sufficient to annul the marriage. But the next moment he laughed at the idea. Mr Crampton would surely never be such a fool as to take advantage of a loop-hole that would bring disgrace upon his daughter's name! How foolish he was to let so absurd an idea worry him!

But why the deuce didn't Jenny come back? It was now four o'clock. This was carrying a joke too far. She couldn't possibly have lost her way in such a place as Dover. Besides, she wasn't the sort of girl to lose her way! Even if she had broken her leg, or done any unlikely thing of that sort, she would have had the nous to call assistance, or send him a message to say what was the matter. The only solution of the mystery that he could think of, was that she had gone for a walk and wandered so far away that she was too tired to walk home, quicker. But why, in that case, had she not procured some vehicle to

convey her back again. The more Frederick thought of it, the more puzzled he became. When five o'clock struck, he went out of doors for the second time, and ran all over the place, making inquiries of everybody he met. One girl said she had seen a very pretty young lady at about one o'clock that afternoon, walking towards the cliffs. She particularly noticed that she wore a large chip hat with scarlet poppies in it, and a white dress. She had a book in her hand, and she went up that way, continued his informant, pointing in the direction of the grassy downs. Frederick thanked her and commenced running off in the direction she had intimated. Of course, he said to himself, the cool breezy downs would be far more likely to attract Jenny than the hot beach. How foolish it was of him not to have thought of that before! He walked rapidly straight ahead of him for three or four miles, and then stopped to consider what he was doing. Jenny was not there! He

could see from end to end of the broad wide expanse, and a sheep would have been visible to the naked eye. What was the use of his rushing about in that aimless manner, after a full-grown woman. Jenny was such a spoilt child, the Lord only knew whether she might not be playing a practical joke on him all this time, and hiding away for her own pleasure to see how much she could frighten him. He had been far wiser to eat his luncheon in comfort and let the young lady see that that sort of trick would not do with him. He was beginning to feel a little angry and hurt by this time. It was not good manners, to say the least of it—it showed a lack of good feeling and good taste to make him look like a fool in the eyes of the hotel servants, so soon after their wedding-day. He should give up the search as a bad job, and return to the Castle Warden and rest. Without doubt, she would come in for her dinner.

He gained the hotel again, but still

no news had been heard of the missing lady. By this time every menial in the house knew that the bride (for when can people ever hide the glaring fact that they were married yesterday?) had played truant, designedly or otherwise, and many were the conjectures as to her reason for making herself so conspicuous. Meanwhile, Frederick Walcheren sat in his own apartments, by turns angry, impatient, anxious and despairing. He hardly took heed how the time went on. Every moment he expected to hear the sound of Jenny's footstep running up the staircase—to hear her merry voice telling him the reason of her extraordinary absence—to feel her arms round his neck and her lips pleading for forgiveness. But the hours went on till seven and eight o'clock had struck, and still she was not there. As the last hour sounded Frederick heard a low tap on his door; he was not in the mood to see strangers or talk with them, but he cried, 'Come in!' The door opened, and the landlord

of the Castle Warden entered and closed it securely behind him.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ he commenced, ‘but I am told that your lady has not come home, and that you are rather uneasy about her.’

‘Well, I am, naturally,’ replied Frederick, ‘in fact, I don’t know what the devil to think about her absence. It is most extraordinary! I went out to bathe this morning, leaving Mrs Walcheren here, and when I returned she was gone. No one saw her go out, nor can I hear any news of her, except from a little girl, who says she met her walking in the direction of the cliffs, about one o’clock this afternoon. I have been all over the cliffs, and the town, and the beach, but can neither see nor hear anything more. What should you advise me to do, Mr Cameron? I am nearly distracted with anxiety.’

‘The lady was seen going towards the cliffs,’ said the landlord, musingly, ‘our cliffs are not very safe for strangers.’

I hope there has not been an accident.'

At this Frederick leapt from his seat as if he had been shot.

'My God! man,' he cried, 'what do you mean? You cannot think it possible that—that—'

He tried to finish the sentence, but failed.

'Indeed, sir, I meant nothing but that we must look at all possible contingencies if we are to find the young lady. It is a long time for her to be away, and, if I mistake not (though I hope you will excuse my mentioning it), the day after her wedding.'

'Yes, yes; I don't care who knows it,' replied Frederick in a voice of pain. 'We were only married yesterday, that makes this all the more mysterious and extraordinary; but how are we to ascertain the truth? What am I to do?'

'If you will allow me, sir, I will send some of the boatmen who know the cliffs to search for Mrs Walcheren, and they

will soon relieve your suspense, for if she is there they will find her safe enough.'

'By all means; I ought to have thought of it myself. Thank you, Mr Cameron; pray send for the boatmen as soon as possible, and I will accompany them.'

Mr Cameron looked dubious.

'If you will permit me, sir, to advise you, I should say stay here, in case of your being wanted, or other news arriving.'

But Frederick was not to be persuaded.

'Stay here!' he echoed; 'what on earth should I do that for? My place is with the men who are going to find her. She has lost her way, probably, and is wandering about in the dark. Of course, I shall accompany them.'

But the landlord kept his back firmly against the door, and prevented the young man passing out.

'You will forgive me, sir, but you must not go—not just yet—not till I have said something. I have been try-

ing to break it to you, Mr Walcheren, but I am afraid I have done it badly. They *have* found her, sir. She was found hours ago, and I came to tell you so.'

Frederick Walcheren stared at him, as if he thought he was mad.

'*Found!*' he ejaculated, 'and hours ago. What do you mean? Why has she not come home then? Is she injured—hurt? Has any accident happened to her?'

'Yes, sir, there has indeed, and you must try and bear it like a man. The lady has been hurt—badly—and she was found on the beach by two boatmen at five o'clock, or thereabouts.'

'Hurt! my darling. Oh! my God! this is hard,' exclaimed Frederick, in a voice of anguish. 'But where is she? Why have they not brought her here? Why did they not send for me?'

'Well, sir, they did not know where the lady belonged at first, nor who she was, so they carried her to the nearest

public-house; "The Bottle and Spurs," which is half-way down the cliffs to the town.'

'A public-house!' cried Walcheren, indignantly; 'how dared they take a lady there? What was Mrs Walcheren about, to consent to it? Order a carriage at once, if you please, Mr Cameron, and I will go and fetch her home.'

The landlord fidgeted with the handle of the door.

'Well, you see, sir, I am not sure if the authorities will allow of her removal. It's the usual thing, under the circumstances, you see, and sorry as I should be to disoblige you, I'm afraid my customers might object to her being brought here. "The Bottle and Spurs" is a very respectable house, sir, and everything will be done, I feel sure, as can be done, to make things as little unpleasant for you as possible, but the authorities—'

Still the unhappy man did not understand the extent of his calamity. He sat

down again and passed his hand wearily through his hair.

‘What does it all mean?’ he muttered in a dazed manner. ‘At all events order the carriage and send for the best doctor in the town to accompany me.’

‘The doctor is here sir,’ replied the landlord, quickly, ‘ready to speak to you. Dr M‘Coll, one of our most skilful practitioners.’

Then he opened the door, and called out, ‘Will you step up, doctor, please, the gentleman is ready to see you,’ and in another minute a middle-aged kindly-looking man entered the room and went up to Walcheren’s side.

‘Doctor!’ said Frederick faintly, ‘what is all this about? I don’t understand it. Have you seen my wife? Is she much hurt?’

‘She is not suffering now, my dear sir,’ replied the doctor.

‘Thank God for that. But why did you not bring her home? I have been in such awful suspense all the afternoon.’

‘I am sure you must have been, but now I am going to take you to see her. Here, Mr Cameron, a glass of brandy for Mr Walcheren. No! no soda thanks. I want him to take it as it is.’

He held the liquor to Frederick’s lips, who drank it at a draught, and put down the wine-glass with a deep sigh.

‘You must nerve yourself to hear what I have to tell you,’ said Dr M‘Coll firmly. ‘I told you your wife no longer suffered, it is because she has gone beyond the reach of suffering. She had been dead for hours before the boatmen found her.’

The young man sprung from his seat with the one word on his lips—‘DEAD!’ He stared at his informant for a moment wildly, and then sinking down on his chair again, threw his arms over his stricken face and burst into a storm of tears.

‘Leave him alone,’ whispered the doctor to the landlord; ‘they will save his brain.’ But the next minute Frederick leapt up, and, seizing Dr M‘Coll by the arm, exclaimed,—

‘Take me to her. Don’t let us lose a moment. Oh, my God! my darling, my darling!’

He tore down the staircase as he spoke, closely followed by the landlord and the doctor. The waiters and chambermaids, who were hanging about the passages discussing the awful event that had occurred, made way respectfully for him as he appeared, and looked after the bereaved bridegroom with melancholy interest. But Frederick might have passed through the ranks of a regiment at that moment without perceiving them. There was but one idea in his brain—to get as quickly as he could to the side of his beloved. He had heard distinctly what the doctor said, but he did not realise that Jenny was dead—that she would never speak to him, nor smile at him, nor kiss him any more. The drive to the public-house was performed in mournful silence, and when they reached it they were at once taken through the bar to a back room, where on a table was placed, just as she had been found, all that

was left of sweet Jenny Walcheren. Her chip hat, so fresh and pretty in the morning, was still attached to her hair, by a long pin with a butterfly at the end of it, but it was crushed and forced back upon her head by the awful fall she had sustained. Her white dress had been decently composed about her young limbs; she might have almost have deceived one into the belief that she was sleeping, except for the purple lips which were drawn off the white teeth, and a dark blue bruise over the right eye, where her temple had struck the cruel rocks. But Frederick saw nothing but that he had regained his wife, and falling on her body, covered it with kisses, imploring her by every fond entreaty he could frame, to open her eyes once more and look at him, and to uncloset her bruised and livid lips and speak his name. At last his madness calmed down a little, leaving a dull despair behind it, when he turned to the doctor and said,—

‘Tell me, for mercy’s sake, how did it happen?’

‘We are as much in the dark as you are, my dear young friend,’ replied Dr M‘Coll, ‘all we know is, that two Deal boatmen, Jackson and Barnes by name, went to the lower beach after their boats, which are drawn up there, at five this afternoon, and found the poor lady lying under the cliffs, over which there is no doubt she must have fallen, but how, there is nothing to tell. They did not know her name, so carried her here and sent for me. But I could do nothing. She must have been dead for two or three hours before I saw her. When I was convinced of that, I set inquiries on foot, to find out who she was, and they soon led me to the Castle Warden Hotel.’

‘It wasn’t easy to mistake her,’ interposed Mr Cameron, whose own eyes were suspiciously red; ‘the prettiest bride, as everyone says, we have had in the hotel for the last twelve month.’

‘Don’t, don’t,’ said Frederick, in a voice of the keenest pain. ‘Doctor, how shall we take her back? She shall

not lie here! I must take her to the hotel at once.'

'My dear Mr Walcheren, even if that were admissible, it would not be permitted. The body must not be touched until after the inquest, which, unfortunately, cannot be held till Monday.'

'She must lie here on this rough table, within sound of those rough voices, for forty-eight hours? Oh, impossible! I will not allow it!'

'My dear sir, you must allow it! It is the law! This poor young lady has met her death in a mysterious manner, and, until the police have evidence that it was an accident, they will not, in the cause of justice, permit the body to be tampered with.'

'An accident! but how could it be anything but an accident?' said Frederick, staring at the doctor.

'I have no doubt myself whatever in the matter; but the law must be satisfied. Meanwhile, let me persuade you, Mr Walcheren, to return to the hotel

and try and calm yourself. You can do no good by remaining here, and I will engage that every respect shall be paid to her remains.'

'*I go away,*' said Frederick, in a broken voice, 'and leave her lying here? Oh, no; you mistake me! It is impossible! If I may not take her away yet, I shall stay by her till I can! Nothing shall persuade me to leave her, my darling little wife!' and he took one of her dead hands and kissed it fondly as he spoke.

'If you are determined—' began Dr M'Coll.

'I am determined, and nothing will shake my determination. Here I remain till they take my angel from me. But is an inquest imperative? I cannot bear to think of it! It is such an indignity—such a public insult! A body of strangers, men, too, whom I would not have allowed in her presence whilst living, to be admitted to view her remains. I am rich, doctor! Can no

payment of money avert this outrage?’

‘Nothing can avert it, Mr Walcheren; but I will take care it is conducted as quietly as possible. Remember, it is in the cause of justice; and now, what can I do for you? Can I wire the sad news to any of her relatives, or yours? You should have your own friends near you in this trial.’

Frederick turned and seized the doctor’s hands as if he were a child, clinging to him in his trouble.

‘Advise me, tell me what to do,’ he said. ‘I am unfit to think for the best. My head is all in a maze. Doctor, I must tell you the truth. This was a runaway marriage. She was an only child, and her parents doated on her. I dare not think what they will say. How am I to break it to them? Ought I to go myself?’

‘I don’t think they would let you leave Dover until after the inquest, Mr Walcheren, but your late wife’s relations should

certainly be told at once. If you wish it, to-morrow being a free day with me, I will go and break the sad intelligence to them.'

'It will greatly relieve me if you will. And every expense, you know doctor—'

'Yes, yes. We need not mention that at present. When you have strength to write down the names and addresses, I will make my arrangements.'

'And what about the gentleman who called twice to see Mrs Walcheren to-day?' inquired the landlord. 'Is he a relation of hers?'

'No, curse him!' said Frederick unthinkingly.

The doctor and the landlord glanced at one another.

'I have *his* name and address on his card,' whispered Mr Cameron significantly to his companion. 'I fancy he will be subpœnaed. He may have seen the poor lady after she left the hotel.'

'What are you whispering about?' said Frederick irritably.

‘Nothing, sir. I will speak to the people of the house. I know them well, and they will see you have everything you may want.’

‘And I will communicate with you directly I return to Dover,’ added the doctor.

And so they left him to his vigil, with his hand clasping the hand of his dead wife, and his face bowed down till it was lost in the folds of her dress.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning Henry Hindes received a scrawl, in a hand which he could not recognise as that of Mr Crampton's, containing but three words, 'Come to me.'

He guessed at once what they meant. He had just returned from church with his wife and elder children. He had not dared to refuse to go, for he was a regular attendant there, and the omission would have looked peculiar. So he had stood and knelt and sat through a service of two mortal hours, whilst his eyes gazed into space and his mind was a blank, and he only followed mechanically what the others said or did.

He walked home with Hannah on

his arm and Elsie and Laurie trotting before them, for the Hindes were far too strict a family to have out their horses on a Sunday, but all the while that acquaintances were bowing and smiling and exchanging civilities with himself and his wife, he was wondering how soon the news would reach Hampstead, and if it would come by telegraph or post, or if Walcheren would send a special messenger to break it to the old people at 'The Cedars.' And as soon as he re-entered his own house, the note was handed to him with the fatal words 'Come to me!' He knew then that the worst was known—that the poor parents had been told of their bereavement, and that it was his mission to fly to comfort them.

'What can be the matter?' questioned Hannah. 'Can they have already heard from Jenny, or do you think it possible she can be in Hampstead? Oh, Henry! if they meet, surely Mr Crampton cannot refuse to speak to her!'

‘I know no more than you do,’ he answered, ‘but I suppose I must go! The old man may have been taken ill. He looked bad enough for anything yesterday evening.’

‘Oh! certainly, Henry dear, you must go at once, and you can take your luncheon with them. But I shall be impatient to hear what he wants you for. If Jenny should be there—oh, Henry, you *will* let me know, won’t you? for I should love to give the dear girl a kiss, and assure her of my faithful friendship. You will send someone over to tell me, in that case, won’t you, dearest?’

‘Yes, yes; of course I will,’ he answered, quickly, ‘but there is no likelihood of such a thing. Good-bye, I had better be off at once.’

And so he left her. The scene he encountered at ‘The Cedars’ is easier imagined than described. Mr Crampton received him in his library, in the presence of his wife, and sister-in-law, and Dr M‘Coll. The old man looked as if he had suddenly crumpled up. His features

were drawn and shrivelled, and his complexion the colour of parchment. His wife was laid face downwards on a couch at the further end of the room, stupefied with the shock of the news they had just heard, whilst Miss Bostock sat by her, silent and motionless, with her hands hanging passively on her lap. No one stirred except the doctor, as Henry Hindes, white and trembling, but with the assumption of being at his ease, entered the room.

‘Well, my dear friend,’ he commenced cheerily, ‘what is it?’

Mr Crampton turned to the doctor, and muttered in a croaking voice, ‘Tell him.’

‘I have the misfortune to be the bearer of very bad news to Mr and Mrs Crampton, sir,’ said Dr M‘Coll, in obedience to his instructions. ‘Their daughter, Mrs Walcheren, met with a terrible accident on the Dover cliffs yesterday afternoon, and is, in fact—has not recovered the injuries inflicted—is lying at this moment—dead!’

Henry Hindes' face went crimson instead of pale.

'Dead, sir!' he ejaculated slowly, as if he were chosing his words, 'are you sure she is dead? An accident? How can you tell it was an accident? Might not someone have done it on purpose—have pushed her over?'

Then he paused, as if he thought he had been talking too fast, and repeated his first question: 'But are you sure that she will not recover? She is very young, you know,' after which, perceiving the grief of all around him, he broke down, exclaiming, 'Oh! Jenny dead! Impossible! Impossible! Why, I went to see her only yesterday! She can't be dead! my dear, dear friend!' seizing old Crampton's hand; 'don't give way! It is impossible!'

'You are only buoying this gentleman up with false hopes, sir,' said Dr M'Coll. 'There is no doubt of the truth of the news, distressing as it may be, and I am commissioned by Mr Walcheren to

break it to all whom it may concern. As to your suggestion that it may be due to foul play, there is nothing whatever to point to it, but it will cause the subject of the inquiry at the inquest to-morrow. Your presence will, of course, be necessary, also Mr Crampton's. I understand, as you say yourself, that you went down to Dover yesterday to see the unfortunate lady, so that your testimony may be valuable to the coroner, and the marriage having been, I am told, a little irregular, there is the more necessity that everything should be made perfectly clear.'

'An inquest!' stammered Hindes. 'But surely there is no need of our undergoing such a painful ordeal? Why, it will nearly kill Mr Crampton. My dear friend, you must not think of attending it.'

'Not go?' cried the old man, suddenly rousing himself from the lethargy into which he had temporarily fallen. 'What are you saying, Hindes? Of course we must go. Don't you see how this has come about? That villain has murdered

her ; he stole her from me first, and then he killed her. Who else would have pushed her over the cliff? My poor butchered lamb! my pretty Jenny! my beautiful, innocent daughter! Oh! but we will be avenged on him, never fear; we'll see him brought to justice and give a hand to set him swinging. My poor child! my murdered darling! I can see how the whole damnable trick was done!'

'You must not heed what he says,' whispered the doctor to Henry Hindes, 'the shock has been too much for him, though I broke it as gently as I could. You must get him to bed and give him a sleeping draught, but don't listen to any nonsense he may talk. There never was a clearer case of misadventure. The poor girl went out on the cliffs alone and fell over them. The coroner can bring in no other verdict.'

'But why, then, need we attend?' asked Hindes, with quivering lips; 'it will be a fearful trial for all of us. What do we

need more than your assurance of the calamity that has befallen?’

‘You may need nothing more, Mr Hindes, but the law needs your deposition as to what you know of the matter.’

‘I know nothing—nothing—’ repeated Hindes.

‘Then you can say so,’ answered Dr M‘Coll, shortly.

‘No, we know nothing as yet,’ exclaimed Mr Crampton, eagerly, ‘but we *will* know it. We will not rest till we have got at the bottom of this infamy. If ever a poor child was murdered, my girl has been.’

‘Papa, papa,’ wailed Mrs Crampton from the sofa, ‘don’t speak like that, or you will break my heart.’

‘Ay, my poor woman,’ said her husband, ‘you’ve plenty of cause to grieve. They’ve taken your ewe lamb from you. You had but one left, and the Lord let her be done to death, without stretching forth His hand to save. And yet they say He cares for us! But the murderer

shall be brought to justice, never fear. I'll see to that.'

'Oh! if he goes on like this he'll kill me,' sobbed the tortured mother.

'Mr Crampton,' interposed the doctor, 'we all feel deeply for you in this sore affliction, but you must not bring unmeaning accusations against anyone. There is no question of how your poor daughter came by her death. It was an unfortunate accident, nothing more.'

'I know better, sir, I know better,' replied Mr Crampton. 'You can't deceive me. My lamb was murdered, and may God's deepest curse rest—'

'Oh! stop, stop,' cried Henry Hindes, holding up his hand. 'It is terrible to hear you blaspheming in this manner, without the least authority to do so. It will not ease your own pain, Crampton, and may add to it hereafter. For your wife's sake and your own, let me take you to your room, where you can think over this terrible news in quiet. Trust in God, Crampton, trust in God. There

is nothing else to be done in a time like the present.'

But the old man, usually so acquiescent in all that his partner said, turned round on him, on this occasion, in a fury.

'Don't preach to me, Hindes!' he exclaimed, angrily. 'It's all very well for you to talk of trusting in God, whilst your own kids are safe at home, but lose five, my boy, lose five—three boys and two girls—and set all your hopes and chances of happiness on the remaining one, and have her murdered before your eyes, and then talk of trusting in God. You're a hypocrite, sir, a d—d hypocrite.'

'Mr Crampton,' said Henry Hindes, deeply wounded, 'I never thought to hear you speak to me like this.'

'For shame, John, for shame!' exclaimed his wife, rousing herself for a moment. 'What are you thinking of? Mr Hindes, too, who loved our darling almost as if she had been his own child,

and who has always been so kind to her and us all.'

'Ah, well, well,' said the old man in a tired voice, 'I suppose I was wrong, and I ask your pardon for it, Hindes. But I don't seem to quite know what I am saying. My head keeps going round so. I suppose you are right, and I should be better by myself for a few hours. Give me your arm, and take me to my own room. I leave this gentleman in your hands, Hindes. See that he is attended to, and arrange everything for our going down to Dover. Good-morning, sir!' and with that Mr Crampton rose, and, leaning on the arm of his friend, quitted the apartment.

There was a less difficult task with the women, whose sorrow was too deep for words. Then Dr M'Coll agreed with Mr Hindes that they had better travel down to Dover by an early train on the morrow, as every endeavour was being made to have the inquest on that day, on account of the hot weather rendering it

desirable to get the burial over as quickly as possible. Hindes shuddered at the thought, but showed no emotion beyond that which was evinced by his white face and silent demeanour. Luncheon was then served for the doctor, and he departed to interview Mr Philip Walcheren on the matter, when Henry Hindes was free to return home.

Here, as may be imagined, he had a difficult task before him, but he felt freer, for, in the presence of his wife, who had loved Jenny Crampton so dearly, he was not ashamed to break down himself, and give some relief to his overcharged feelings. Hannah's grief was extreme, but she tried to curb it for the sake of her husband, who only rose in her estimation for the tears and moans which he felt he might indulge in at last.

Both husband and wife had quite exhausted themselves with their emotion, when a servant entered to announce that a constable desired to speak to his master. Hannah could not help observing how

ividly white Henry became at this intimation. She could not understand it, unless the sad events of the day had so undermined his usual intrepidity as to make him start at shadows.

‘Only a constable, Henry, dear,’ she repeated, seeing how he trembled. ‘It is probably something to do with this unhappy business! Will you see him here?’

‘No! no!’ replied her husband, as he wiped the sweat from his forehead, ‘not here! Let him wait, Johnson! I will be with him presently—presently!’

Could anything have been discovered? he thought to himself, as he leant against the form of his wife for support, and she passed her cambric handkerchief across his wet hair. Was it possible he had dropped any article belonging to him on the spot where he and Jenny had stood together? Had this man come to tell him that he was suspected, and must consider himself under arrest until the inquest had been held on the morrow?

He pushed Hannah's kindly ministrations away and stood upright.

'I cannot see him in this condition,' he said, alluding to his swollen eyelids and stained cheeks. 'I must go to my room first and smooth my hair.'

He escaped by a back way as he spoke, and gaining his dressing-room, arranged his toilet a little. Then he searched in a drawer for a bottle of morphia, which he had been occasionally in the habit of taking to induce sleep, for the condition of his mind regarding Jenny Crampton had not been conducive to sound and restful repose.

'If I am taken away from here,' he thought, 'I will not reach Dover. They shall see I know a trick worth two of that.'

He thrust the vial in his breast and descended to the hall to interview the constable. But he had come on a very simple errand. He had received information from the Dover police that the inquiry on the death of Mrs Walcheren had been fixed for the morrow, and that Mr Hindes' presence would be necessary.

‘You see, sir,’ said the man, fumbling with his papers, ‘we’re sorry to trouble you, but as you went down to Dover to see the lady, it is necessary the coroner should hear the why and the wherefore of everything to come to a right understanding of the case. It’s a sad thing, ain’t it, sir? A poor young creature done to death in a moment, as you may say, and only married on the Friday.’

‘A frightful thing, indeed, constable!’ replied Hindes.

‘The poor gentleman, they say, is almost out of his senses, as he well may be,’ continued the policeman; ‘they can’t get him away from the corpse, and he turns round like a madman on any one who proposes of it. Perhaps so be you’re a relation, sir!’

‘No, no; only a friend,’ said Hindes, quickly.

‘Well, he ought to have some friend by him now, if all they tell me is true, for the shock seems to have unsettled his mind. The inquiry won’t be till

three o'clock to-morrow afternoon, sir, at the 'Bottle and Spurs' public-house, where the poor lady lies. If you're there, sir, they'll get it over at once, but if so be as you're not there, the jury will have to be called to attend another day.'

'I shall be there,' replied Henry Hindes, and then he went upstairs again and replaced the vial in the drawer before he rejoined his wife. 'Only a notice to attend this miserable inquest, my dear,' he said in explanation as he threw himself on a couch and buried his face in his hands.

'Oh, Henry, how much I wish it were not necessary for you to go! I know how bitterly you will feel it! To have to be questioned by a man who cares nothing for our poor dear darling, and who will rake up all sorts of things to wound you and make the remembrance still more bitter than it is; but it is your duty, and you must go! Shall you see her, Harry?' she added, in a whisper.

Her husband shuddered.

‘I suppose so! That is, if I must!’

‘But you wouldn’t like our sweet Jenny to go to her grave without a last look, dear, I am sure! And may I send some flowers to put over her? Will you take them from me?’

‘No! no! for God’s sake, no!’ cried Hindes, covering his face again; ‘I cannot enter into all these harrowing details like women can. I shall go down and come away again as quickly as possible; the sight of the poor child would kill me! I have no morbid inclination for gazing at corpses, Hannah.’

‘But our poor Jenny,’ said his wife, regretfully; ‘it would seem to me like refusing to look at Elsie or Laurie if they were taken from us. Thank God they are not. Oh, poor Mrs Crampton,’ continued Hannah, breaking down again; ‘what must she be feeling at this moment! How I pity her with my whole, whole heart!’

Meanwhile, Philip Walcheren, having

heard the news of Jenny's death from Dr M'Coll, had hastened to the presence of Father Tasker.

'A judgment, a judgment, my dear father!' he exclaimed. 'I have just heard the most terrible piece of news. Poor, misguided Frederick's young wife was killed yesterday by a fall over the cliffs at Dover!'

'Heaven rest her soul!' said the priest, crossing himself. 'Who told you of it?'

'A medical man called M'Coll, who came from Dover, at Frederick's request, to break the news to me. There is to be an inquest held on the remains of the poor, young creature to-morrow, and Frederick would like me to support him on the occasion. Can you manage to accompany me, father?' Your presence might have a great effect on my cousin.'

'No, my son, I think not! You had better go alone! This is not a time for exhortation or reproof. It is the time for affection and kindness. Your poor cousin will, as you say, feel very desolate, and as

if Heaven had forsaken him. Let him find if he has lost a wife he has found a brother. If ever we are to succeed in our plans for him—if ever our hopes of persuading him to enter the Church are to be realised, it is now—now, when he will feel as if the world had given way beneath him. Go down to-night by all means and comfort him as best you can. This marriage was entered into, you tell me, without the consent of the lady's parents. Possibly, they may be the more set against him in consequence of this event, though it happened from no fault of his own. Let him see that his misfortunes bind us more nearly to him—make us more anxious that he should seek comfort where it is only to be obtained—in the exercise of his religion. Heaven's workings are very mysterious, my son. I see already in this sad dispensation, a glimmer of hope for your cousin's future. Perhaps this, and nothing else, would have made him regard your exhortations and my entreaties in a proper light.'

‘God grant you may be right, father,’ answered Philip. ‘If I could see Frederick fulfilling my good Aunt Alicia’s wishes, and his godfather’s intentions, by entering our Holy Church, and dedicating his money to her use, I should feel my life had not been wasted by devoting it to such a purpose.’

CHAPTER X.

FREDERICK was still bending over the dead body of his wife, when Philip Walcheren entered the little back parlour of the 'Bottle and Spurs' that evening. The landlady told him that he had not left the room since the preceding night.

'Nor has bit nor sup passed his lips, sir, except a cup of coffee, which I made expressly, and took to him this morning. Nor haven't his clothes been off, neither! I'm sure I don't know what *is* to become of the poor gentleman at this rate. He seems just eat up with grief.'

'I will go to him,' said Philip, as he turned the handle of the door and entered his cousin's presence.

Frederick was much in the same posi-

tion he had at first assumed. He occupied a chair by the side of the table on which the body of poor Jenny lay—his hand clasped hers, and his head was bowed down on the deal boards.

‘Frederick—my dear Frederick,’ said Philip, gently.

At the sound of his voice the bereaved husband roused himself, and made a slight deprecatory gesture with his hand.

‘Don’t speak to me—don’t reproach me,’ he answered, bitterly, ‘for I cannot bear it.’

‘Far be it from me to reproach you, Frederick,’ replied his cousin as he laid his hand on his; ‘on the contrary, I have come to comfort you, as far as lies in my power, under the terrible calamity that has befallen you.’

‘No one can comfort me, Philip.’

‘No one but our Heavenly Father, Frederick, and our Blessed Mother, who is watching your sufferings even now, with eyes of divine compassion and love.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said the other, brusquely; ‘if she pitied me why didn’t she prevent it? She could stand by and see the whole of my life ruined at a blow. What pity is there in that? What good can her pity do me after my love has been taken from me? Look at her, Philip,’ he continued, uncovering the pretty, bruised face of the dead, over which the livid hues of decomposition were already beginning to steal. ‘See how lovely she was! How young! how innocent! And she loved me—she loved me! And now it is all over; we are torn asunder for evermore. Oh, God! it is too hard for mortal man to bear! They might have let me enjoy a few months, a few weeks of happiness in her affection, but to call her mine one day and to lose her the next—I shall kill myself. I cannot live without her!’

‘Hush, my dear Frederick, hush!’ replied Philip, ‘God’s hand is very heavy upon you, but you must not blaspheme. Was not this beautiful creature His as

well as yours? May He not do as He wills with His own? No one denies the awful grief you are called upon to bear, but you cannot lessen it by raving against the justice of the Almighty. Rather bend with submission to His decree, my dear cousin, and live your future life so as you may meet your wife again. You can think of nothing now but your exceeding loss, but when you have time to consider, you will realise that she is not really gone, only hidden from your natural sight for a little while, and that, if you choose it, you are bound to meet her again and to dwell with her for ever!’

This thought broke down the unhappy man.

‘Oh! my Jenny, my Jenny!’ he sobbed, ‘is it possible you are looking on your wretched husband now? that you pity and love him and will wait for him at the eternal gates? Philip, Philip, is this a judgment on me? I have been thinking ever since it happened of that unfortunate

girl, Rhoda Berry, at Luton! I cannot get her out of my head! All last night I fancied I saw her grinning and rejoicing at my misfortune. Has God done this out of anger for my sin? Has He made my sweet innocent wife the scapegoat for my iniquity? Was it the blood of the other woman, crying up from the eternal depths for vengeance, that caused my angel to take a false step and meet with her death over those dreadful cliffs? The idea has nearly driven me mad! Tell me it is not true!’

‘My dear cousin—my dear brother, for such you are in affection to me—I cannot say that this loss has not been sent by the Almighty Father to wake you to a sense of the sinful life you have been leading. I should be false to my trust and to my belief were I to say so. But for whatever reason it has been permitted, it has come in love, Frederick, from a Father Who cannot see you ruin your hopes of everlasting happiness, but would have the soul of your beloved wife, and

your own soul as well, in His keeping. My dear Fred, you must know that you were wrong, not only to marry this poor child under the existing circumstances, but to marry her without the consent of her parents. Think of the trouble you have brought upon them, those poor old people, who had no one to solace their age but this young creature who lies before us. Frederick, my dear cousin, I know you don't believe in prayer, but let me pray for you and for *her*, that she may be received into the ranks of those who shall be saved hereafter, even though as by fire !'

'Do you mean to say she is not happy now? That she has not already entered into the joys of Heaven?' asked Frederick anxiously.

'My dear cousin, you have surely not so far forgotten the precepts of our Holy Church as to imagine that Heaven is obtained without purgatory—bliss without self-sacrifice. This poor girl, however innocent and blameless she may

have seemed, will have her expiation to pass through, as well as all of us. But we can pray for her, that she may find relief. We can yield up our own wishes, our own pleasures, that she may the sooner pass from purgatory to Paradise. Much will rest with you. Your future life will make or mar her progress to the gates of Heaven !'

'It shall not mar it,' replied Frederick, brokenly ; 'my life is worth nothing to me now, and I will give it into your hands and Father Tasker's to do with as you think fit !'

Philip Walcheren smiled inwardly, not sardonically, for he was in earnest if man ever was, but with sublime satisfaction that the Almighty had seen fit to deliver the soul of this bruised reed into the power of the Church. He had no doubt now but that his hopes for his cousin's future were assured, and the poisoned barb had gone home so deeply that whilst the sting lasted he would be able to wield Frederick as he chose. But he was too

prudent to press the subject home at the present moment. He contented himself with consoling his cousin to the best of his ability, always keeping before him the power and influence of the Blessed Mother of God, and her interest in the souls of young girls, like the poor dead child before them, until the miserable husband was almost supplicating the Virgin of his boyhood, then and there, to save his darling from the pit his misdeeds had drawn her into—he, who had not breathed a prayer for years past.

Philip Walcheren stayed by him all through that night and until the coroner's jury assembled on the following afternoon. At the appointed hour a noise, as of the trampling of many feet, sounded in the public bar of the house, and Philip touched Frederick gently on the shoulder.

‘Fred, dear old man, rouse yourself. Here are the coroner and jury coming to view the body. And Mr Crampton and Mr Hindes wish to come in first. Be brave, my dear cousin. It is a painful

but necessary ordeal. Stand apart a little and let your wife's father have access to the body. It is his right, you know.'

The young man stood up mechanically, and taking Philip's arm staggered to the other side of the room. Mr Crampton entered, leaning on Henry Hindes. The latter was suffering the tortures of the damned. His eyes were not still for a moment, and his whole frame shook and quivered. The sight of the crushed and pallid corpse struck both men like a heavy blow. Old Crampton gazed at it for a minute, muttering, 'My God! My God! can that be my Jenny?' but Hindes said nothing, and kept his eyes turned on Frederick Walcheren. Presently Mr Crampton's followed suit, and the sight appeared to rouse him into fury.

'Yes!' he exclaimed, brandishing his stick, 'there lies my murdered child, and there stands her murderer.'

'Crampton, Crampton, think what you are saying!' cried Hindes, shaking his

friend's arm, whilst Philip Walcheren said angrily, 'if the effect of this sad sight, which should draw two men in misfortune together, is only to cause you to make malevolent and unjustifiable accusations, sir, I shall be compelled, as my cousin's friend, to request you to leave the room. This lady may have been your daughter, but she was his wife, and as such, no one has a right to intrude upon his grief.'

'Ay, Ay! a wife he stole from me, sir—that he *stole* from me, and murdered!' repeated the old man, shaking with rage.

'Gentlemen, I must beg you to clear the room,' said the landlord at this juncture. 'The coroner and jury are coming in to view the body.'

His wife, entering at the same time, hustled them all into another apartment, where they sat glaring at each other, until their time came to be called to appear and give evidence. The coroner, a Mr Procter, rather prided himself on his astuteness. He was for ever finding

a mountain in a molehill, for he hoped to mount the magisterial chair some day, and his aim was to impress the public with his cleverness and ingenuity. The first witnesses called were the two boatmen Jackson and Barnes, who had found Jenny's body lying at the bottom of the cliffs.

'It was five o'clock or nigh upon it, please yer honour,' commenced the spokesman, 'as I and my mate here went to the lower beach to haul up our boats.'

'What do you call the "lower beach"?' snapped Mr Proctor, who was a sandy-haired man, with a pimply face and red-rimmed eyes, 'all the beach is lower than the cliffs.'

'Yes, yer honour; but we calls the beach below Dragon's Foot the lower beach, because so be, when the tide runs out—'

'You are not here to tell us when the tide runs out, but to say how you discovered the body of the deceased Jane Emily Walcheren,' said the coroner, consulting his papers.

‘Yes, yer worship. Well! as I and my mate here was a-haulin’ up the boats, I says to him, I says, “Bob,” I says, “what be that ’ere bundle of white,” I says, “under the cliff?” “Blowed if I know,” he says, “it looks like a sheet as has blowed over in drying,” he says.’

‘You are not here to tell the jury what your mate thought the body looked like. You are to tell us how you found it.’

‘Yes, sir. Well, sir, we thought it was a sheet, you see, but when we went to pick it up, we see it was a young woman. So we lifted her atween us and carries her to this ’ere ’ouse, and then my mate he fetches Dr M’Coll. And that’s all, sir!’

‘Very good! Now, tell us, please, when you found the body was there no one about?’

‘Not a soul as we see, my lord—I mean, yer worship—the beach was empty from hend to hend.’

‘And the cliffs?’

‘Didn’t see a soul on the cliffs neither, yer worship.’

‘You met no one on your way here? You are sure!’

‘Quite sure, your honour! ’Twould be all over the town if we had!’

‘Very well! You can sit down. Call Dr M‘Coll!’

The doctor, having been sworn, deposed that he had been called to the ‘Bottle and Spurs’ at about six o’clock on Saturday night, to see the deceased. She was then quite dead—had been dead for two or three hours. There was a large bruise on the temple caused by her striking against the rocks in her fall. That was of itself sufficient to have caused death, but the spine was broken and the neck. The body was also much bruised. There was no question but that the deceased had met her death by falling over the cliffs.

‘Now, Dr M‘Coll, I should like to put a few questions to you, if you please,’ said Mr Procter, looking his very sharpest.

‘Is it your opinion that the deceased must inevitably have fallen over the cliffs of her own accord? Might she not have been blown over, or pushed over, or thrown herself over by design?’

‘Certainly she might! It is impossible to say how she came to fall over, but she *did* fall over—that is beyond a question.’

‘Ah!’ said the coroner, with self-satisfaction, as if he had discovered a very knotty point. ‘Then you consider death was due—’

‘To dislocation of the spine from a fall over the cliffs.’

‘That’s your opinion, is it?’ remarked the coroner, dubiously.

‘Yes, sir, that’s my opinion,’ replied M‘Coll shortly, as he retired.

The next witness was Crampton. He came tottering into the room, and stood supporting himself on his silver-mounted cane.

‘You are, I believe, the father of the deceased, Mr Crampton,’ began the

coroner, scrutinising the old man through his eye-glasses.

‘I am, sir. She was my only child—the only one I had left.’

‘And she was married on the Friday preceding her death?’

‘She was, worse luck!’

‘Was her marriage undertaken with your consent, Mr Crampton?’

At this question, the old man became violently agitated.

‘It was not, sir. She was stolen from me by a villain, who came to my house under the disguise of friendship, and—’

Some one in the jury remarked that this was quite irrelevant to the evidence on hand, but Mr Proctor ordered him to be silent.

‘This poor gentleman has sustained a double injury,’ he said. ‘Let him tell his story in his own words.’

‘I have not much more to say, gentlemen,’ resumed Mr Crampton. ‘This man, Frederick Walcheren, stole my daughter from me, and the next thing I hear is that

she is dead. It is not a long story, but it is a very bitter one.'

'And you have the full sympathy of the jury for it, Mr Crampton. I believe your daughter was your heiress. Did you threaten to make any alteration in your will if she went against your wishes?'

'I did. I said that if she married this Walcheren, who is a Papist, she shouldn't have a halfpenny.'

'Did you make the same intimation to Mr Walcheren?'

'I think not, at least personally, but I suppose she did, for they ran away together two days afterwards. And this is the end of it—this is the end.'

'You have recognised the deceased as your daughter?'

The father broke down.

'Oh, yes, sir, I have recognised her only too well. My poor pretty darling. She was called the "Beauty of Hampstead," sir, the "Beauty of Hampstead."'

'Thank you, Mr Crampton, that will do. I am sorry to have troubled you so far,

but it was necessary. You can retire, sir. Call Mr Henry Hindes.'

The witness entered the room, with a pallid face, compressed lips, as if resolved that nothing should make him betray himself, and a stolid demeanour which was wholly put on. The stakes were too high. He could not afford to think or fear. All he had to do was to believe things were *not so*, and to act accordingly.

'You look ill, Mr Hindes. Do you wish for a chair?'

'Certainly not! But I am an old friend of the family. I have known the deceased from a child.'

'Ah! We will detain you as short a time as possible. You were in Dover, Mr Hindes, on Saturday last, I believe. Will you tell the jury why you came here?'

'I came at the instigation, and with the knowledge, of my old friends Mr and Mrs Crampton, to bring a message to their daughter, and to see if I could effect a reconciliation between them.'

'Between them and the young couple?'

‘No, not with Mr Walcheren—they steadfastly refused to see or speak with Mr Walcheren—but with his wife, their daughter.’

‘How could a reconciliation be effected with one and not with the other?’

‘Because Miss Crampton—the deceased—had married without the consent of her people, and her father had cut her out of his will. But, as the marriage was somewhat irregular—’

‘How was it irregular?’

‘Miss Crampton was not of age, and Mr Walcheren swore, when he procured the licence, that she was!’

‘Oh! he did!’ said the coroner, making a note of the fact on his papers; ‘and Mr Crampton cut the deceased out of his will in consequence?’

‘He did so, or meant to do so, but he sent me here with a message to the effect that if she would return home, and permit the marriage to be annulled, he would receive her back, but on no other terms.’

‘And may I ask what the lady said when you delivered that message to her?’

‘I never delivered it! I did not see her! I called twice at the Castle Warden Hotel, but each time was told that she was out, so I returned to town without seeing her!’

‘And you did not see Mr Walcheren either!’

‘I did not see Mr Walcheren either.’

‘Upon which you returned to town!’

‘Yes! I went up by the five-thirty train.’

‘One moment, Mr Hindes. Can you tell me if Mr Walcheren was aware of Mr Crampton’s intention to cut his daughter out of his will *before* this marriage took place?’

‘I do not know! I was deputed once to make Mr Crampton’s wishes relative to his daughter known to Mr Walcheren, and the risk may have been mentioned, but he would not take it as a definite decision from me. The chief objection

always brought forward was to his religion. Mr Crampton would not hear of his daughter marrying a Roman Catholic.'

'Of course not! very natural!' observed Mr Procter, who, like most of the middle classes in England, was an ultra-Protestant, and only connected Catholicism with monasteries, nunneries, fasting, confession and the Grand Inquisition.

'That will do, Mr Hindes! you can stand down,' said the coroner, with a smile. The next witnesses examined were Mr Cameron, the landlord of the Castle Warden, and the waiters and chambermaids, who had or had not seen poor Jenny Walcheren leave the hotel on that fatal day.

Then came a call for the last witness—the witness whom Mr Procter had purposely reserved to the last.

'Tell Mr Frederick Walcheren he is required.'

But Philip Walcheren stepped forward instead.

‘Are you the husband of the deceased, sir?’

‘No! I am his cousin. I have come to ask you if his presence and testimony on this, the most trying occasion of his life, cannot be dispensed with? He is half beside himself with grief. Picture to yourself, gentlemen, a young husband bereft the very day after his wedding of all that made his life happy. He is not in a fit state to answer any questions, nor to have his inmost feelings submitted to scrutiny. Besides, he knows no more than you do! He parted with his poor wife in radiant health and spirits on Saturday morning, and never saw her again until she lay on that table as you have seen her. The doctor has given you his testimony that her death was the result of a pure accident! Is it necessary, then, that my poor cousin should be tortured by recalling in public the memories that are nearly driving him out of his mind.’

‘It is absolutely necessary, Mr Wal-

cheren,' replied the coroner, ' the husband's testimony may prove the most important of all. I cannot, in the pursuit of my duty, excuse the presence of your cousin. Call Mr Frederick Walcheren.'

And all eyes were turned eagerly towards the door, to watch the advent of the greatest sufferer of all by this most hapless adventure.

END OF VOL. I.



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